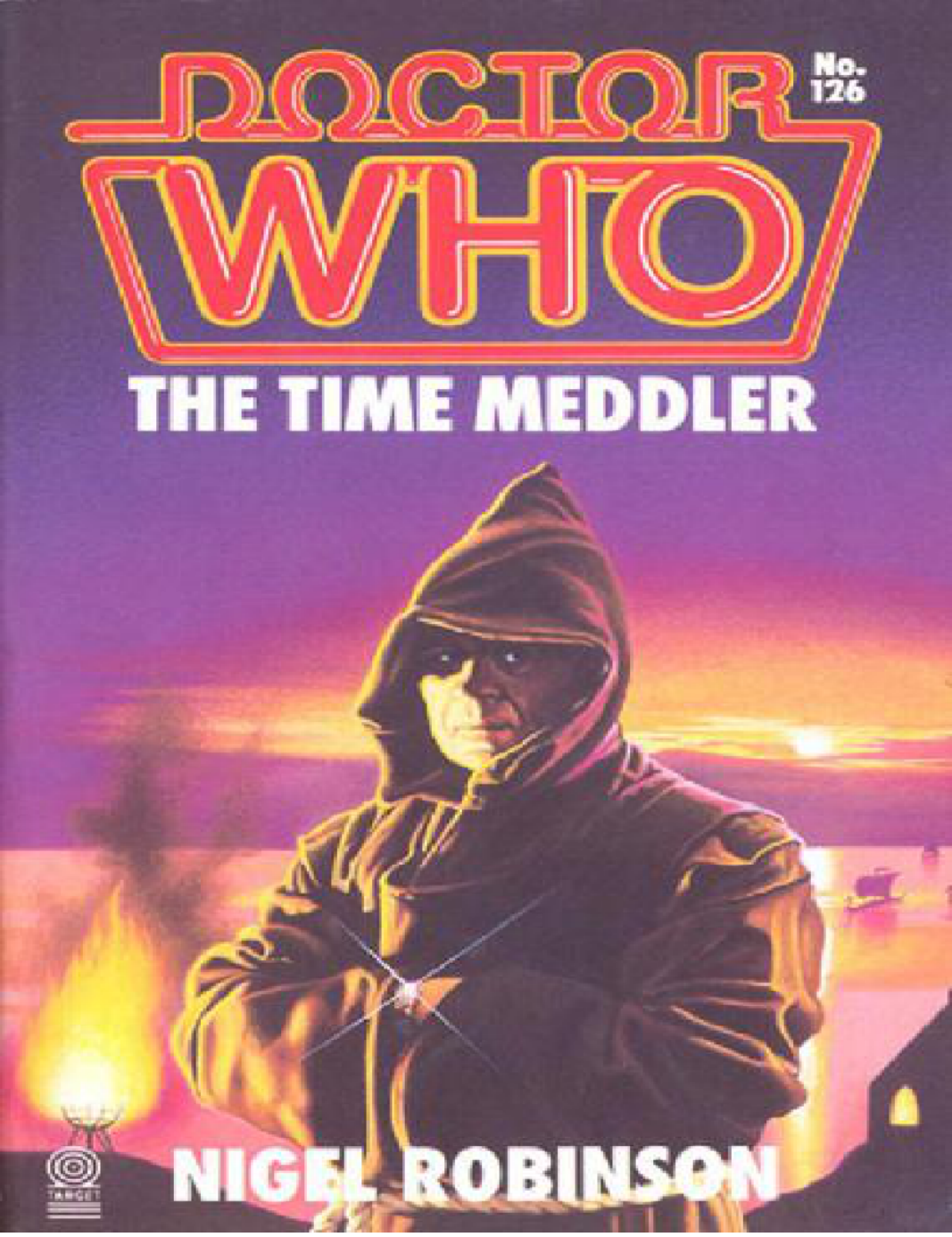
DOCTOR WHO

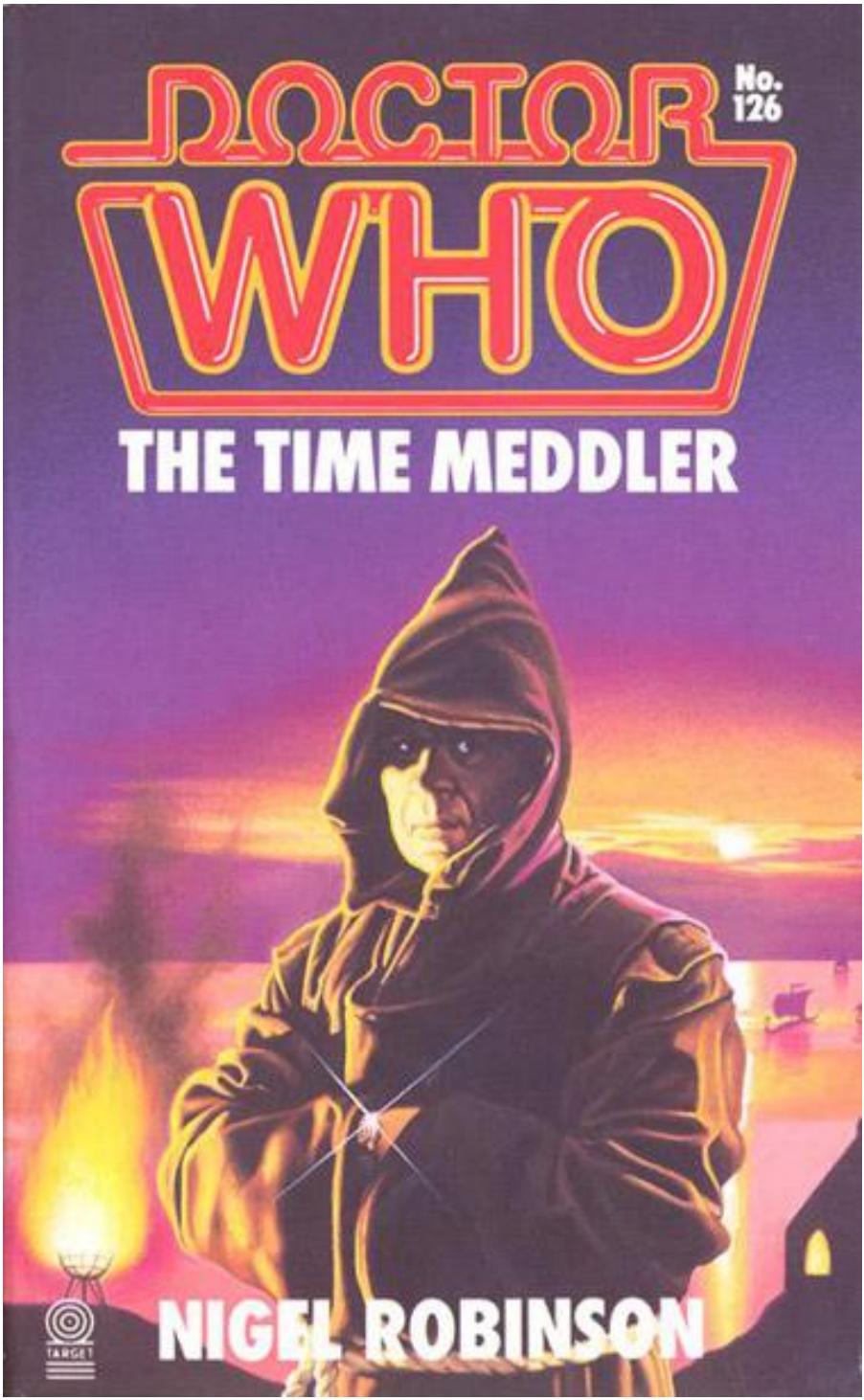
No. 126

THE TIME MEDDLER



NIGEL ROBINSON

TARGET



When the TARDIS materialises on an apparently deserted

Nothumbrian beach, Steven disputes the Doctor's claim that they have travelled back to the eleventh century. The disovery of a modern wristwatch in a nearby forest merely reinforces his opinion.

But it is 1066, the most important date in English history, and the Doctor's arrival has not gone unnoticed. Observing the appearance of the TARDIS is a mysterious monk who recognises the time-machine for what it is. He also knows that the Doctor poses a serious threat to his master plan – a plan which, if successful, could alter the future of the entire world...

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DOCTOR WHO

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NIGEL ROBINSON

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Prologue

The young man in the astronaut's uniform fell to the jungle floor with a sickening thud. For a few dazed moments he lay there motionless, unaware of the destruction all about him. Then he picked himself up and looked around.

Towering fifteen hundred feet above him the City was ablaze. Even down here, at the foot of one of the hundreds of massive stilts which supported the City, the heat was intolerable, almost a physical force. The air was heavy with the cloying stench of burning flesh and molten metal.

Over the roar of the flames as they ripped along the City's walkways he could hear the sound of battle still raging high above him. It was a battle he knew neither side could win: neither the Mechonoids, robotic guardians of the City, nor the strange alien creatures who had come to this planet in search of four mysterious space travellers.

He shielded his eyes as the City flashed a dazzling incandescent white. Instinctively he clutched to his chest the panda bear mascot which he held tightly in his arms.

The City was in its final death agonies: he would need all the luck in the world if he was to escape the inevitable conflagration when the metal supports would finally give way and bring the City crashing down to the ground.

He turned to run, beating a way through the jungle, furiously fighting off the strange fungoid growths which reached out their long barbed tendrils towards him.

Unearthly sounds seemed to echo from the undergrowth, but whether they were the frightened cries of wild beasts or the product of his own fevered imagination he neither knew nor cared.

He had little idea where he was heading for. All he knew was that he had to find the four travellers who had escaped the City shortly before him. Frantically he called out their names: *Doctor! Vicki! Ian! Barbara!* But his voice was soon swallowed up in the sound of battle behind him.

He ran for what seemed like hours until he reached a small clearing in the jungle. His eyes were wild with panic and his exertions had made him weak, but silhouetted in the searing light from the burning City he could make out two oblong shapes. They seemed totally out of place in their jungle surroundings. They stood silent and forbidding, like two monoliths fashioned by an ancient and forgotten race.

He stumbled towards the nearest one and noted with some confusion that it appeared to be a large blue box.

Like a medieval pilgrim seeking sanctuary he began to pound on the double doors at the front of the object. To his surprise, they yielded to his touch and he fell through the open doorway.

The light from within stabbed painfully into his weakened eyes and the world began to spin sickeningly around him. His tired brain tried in vain to comprehend the sight before him.

For a long time he knew nothing more. But just before he passed out he recalled the strange legend he had seen above the doorway. The words seemed somehow familiar, and oddly reassuring:

PUBLIC

POLICE BOX

CALL

1

The Watcher

The white-haired old man hovered intently over the control console and flexed his long bony fingers, making delicate adjustments to one of the six instrument panels before him. As he eased levers into place, his sharp blue eyes flickered over the display of flashing lights and gauges, checking each and every motion of the machine.

From time to time he would glance at the central glass column as it rose and fell with assured regularity.

Pleased with his programming he gave a snort of self-satisfaction. 'There you are, Chesterton, the TARDIS is functioning perfectly...'

His voice tailed off as he realised his mistake. The young girl at the opposite end of the chamber smiled at him affectionately and gently shook her head.

'Of course, they're gone now...' The old man flustered.

An uncomfortable silence fell over the control room as he turned his attention once more to the central console in an attempt to cover up his embarrassment at the mistake.

His companion was a wide-eyed young girl dressed in a loose fitting smock and black trousers. Little more than five feet tall, she possessed elfin good looks and a mischievous little-girl smile. In total contrast to her futuristic surroundings she was sitting in a splendid *Louis Quatorze* chair, idly flipping through the pages of a book.

After a few minutes she tossed the book to the ground with a bored sigh and stood up.

The TARDIS was quiet – and far, far too empty. The Doctor wasn't helping things either, she decided, what with all this brooding and a

face as long as a mile. Still, it must have been quite a wrench for the old man. Ian and Barbara had been the Doctor's companions for a long time, and when they had found a way to return to their proper time and space, the Doctor must have felt their loss very deeply.

She wondered how long it had been since she and the Doctor had sent Ian and Barbara on their way back to Earth and left the planet Mechanus. Hours? Days? It was a funny thing, but in the TARDIS you didn't seem to notice the passing of time. The only thing which gave any indication of its passage was the Doctor's magnificent ormolu clock which ticked its own way through the timelessness of eternity.

And it had stopped.

Clicking her tongue in irritation, she crossed over to the clock and set its pendulum in motion again. Odd how a little thing like that now seemed so important. Still, the ticking of a clock did give some sort of framework – if only a psychological one – to their lives on board the TARDIS.

And anyway, it was something to do.

She sighed. 'I shall miss them, Doctor,' she said, breaking the silence.

The Doctor looked up from his work. 'Who?' he asked with affected disinterest. He knew perfectly well who Vicki was talking about.

'Ian and Barbara, of course,' she replied with an understanding smile.

'Oh, them... I shall miss them too...' There was a tone of regret in his voice. 'First Susan and now them...'

He made a brief check of the read-outs from the TARDIS computer and then wandered over to the chair Vicki had recently vacated. Easing himself into it, he beckoned her over. 'Come here, my dear. I'd like to talk to you.'

'What about the controls?'

'They're already set. We'll be landing shortly.'

Vicki came over and sat down on the floor at the Doctor's feet. She gazed up into his face as an adoring niece would do to her favourite uncle.

'Their decision to leave certainly surprised me,' he admitted. 'It

shouldn't have, of course. It was quite obvious that they intended to take the first opportunity of going back to their own time.'

'Well, they weren't getting any younger, were they?'

Vicki said wickedly.

The Doctor's eyes widened with mock horror. 'It's lucky they're not here to hear you say that!' he chided her good-naturedly. 'Good grief, if you think they're old, what do you think of me?'

Vicki blushed at her *faux pas*. 'You're... different, Doctor,' she said. 'And anyway, we might land in their time one day and be able to talk over old times...'

'Perhaps, Vicki, perhaps...' The Doctor smiled and ruffled the girl's hair. He was touched by Vicki's unquestioning faith in him. But if he were to be truthful to himself he would have to admit that the chance of his ever meeting his old friends again was highly unlikely. The TARDIS very rarely landed anywhere it was supposed to.

Not that it mattered much to the Doctor: the Universe was so full of wonders that there was no need to travel with a fixed destination in mind. But just occasionally, he thought, it would be nice to pilot the TARDIS to a landing of his own choice; perhaps even visit Susan, his granddaughter...

Vicki recognised the signs that the Doctor was becoming morose again. 'Anyway, it's done now,' she chirped up and deftly changed the subject. 'I wonder where the TARDIS will take us next...'

'Yes, it's done now,' sighed the Doctor. 'But I must admit I'm left with one small worry...'

'You know, I wouldn't mind seeing Ancient New York,'

the girl carried on, not listening. 'I didn't get to see much of it what with the Daleks on our trail and everything. But from what I saw from the top of the Empire State Building I wouldn't mind going back there.'

'My dear Vicki, I'm trying to talk to you,' insisted the Doctor, smiling at her enthusiasm but determined to have his own say.

'I'm sorry...'

The Doctor tilted her head affectionately towards him.

‘I just wanted to ask if you’re sure you didn’t want to go back to your own time too. I didn’t give you much chance to consider, did I? And I wouldn’t want to think you’re just staying for the sake of an old man.’

Vicki instantly pooh-poohed the idea. ‘I made my decision a long time ago, Doctor. I want to stay with you.’

She shrugged her shoulders in resignation. ‘Besides, I wouldn’t have anything to go back to...’

Vicki had come from the twenty-fifth century where she had been orphaned and stranded on an alien planet. When the Doctor had offered her a place on board the TARDIS

she had eagerly accepted it. In time a strong bond of affection had grown up between the two of them. The Doctor, Ian and Barbara had become the family Vicki had lost; and for the Doctor Vicki had replaced the aching gap he had felt in his life when his granddaughter had left him to start her own life.

‘Yes, your father...’ The Doctor nodded sympathetically and stroked her hair with almost avuncular concern.

Suddenly Vicki started as the peaceful humming of the control chamber was shattered by a loud *bang!*

‘Did you hear that?’ Vicki’s eyes darted around, trying to locate the source of the noise.

‘Perhaps something has fallen down...’ guessed the Doctor. ‘Or we may have changed course...’

He stood up and made his way over to the central console to check his instruments.

Crash!

Vicki leapt to her feet in alarm and clung tightly to the Doctor’s arm. There was now no mistaking the source of the noise. She indicated the small double doors at the end of the chamber which led into the rest of the ship.

‘There’s someone in the living quarters,’ she whispered fearfully.

Cautiously they approached the closed doors. There was no doubt in

Vicki's mind as to what lay waiting behind them. They had not, after all, escaped the Daleks on Mechanus. One of the deadly mutants had somehow smuggled itself on board and was even now preparing to exterminate them.

'Doctor, be careful,' she hissed in warning as he motioned her to press close against the wall, away from the doors and out of the line of fire. He took off his long Edwardian frock coat and held it up in front of him, with the intention of throwing it over the Dalek's eyestalk when it emerged and thereby temporarily disorientating it. Vicki took off a shoe and held it in her hand, ready to strike.

A Savile Row jacket and a size 3 shoe are hardly the most effective weapons against one of the deadliest creatures in the Universe. But the Doctor and Vicki had very little time to consider the irony of the situation as the doors swung slowly open.

The creature staggered through the open doorway and with a moan fell unconscious to the floor. The Doctor and Vicki gasped in astonishment as they recognised first the grey and ripped space uniform, then the panda bear mascot and finally the intruder's bearded and begrimed face.

Vicki knelt down beside the motionless body and looked up at the Doctor. 'It's Steven,' she said incredulously. 'It's Steven Taylor!'

It was the young astronaut they thought had died in the Mechonoids' City.

Everywhere there was the sound of the sea. It crashed remorselessly against the rugged shoreline, showering the rocks and gorse-covered cliffs with spray. In the blue-grey sky seagulls wheeled and turned, squawked and cried, fighting furiously against the constant battering of the wind. On the small sheltered beach tiny pebbles were skittered back and forth by the tide as it rushed up on its course.

Then a stranger, harsher, more unnatural sound added its voice to the general cacophony. At first it was little more than a whisper, but it soon rose to a trumpetting shriek as though it were attempting to drown out the sound of the thundering sea and the roar of the wind.

Then it suddenly fell silent.

On the pebbled beach which but moments ago had been empty there now stood a strange tall blue box. About ten feet high and four feet wide, its blue paintwork was chipped and peeling. At its front, facing

out to sea, were two panelled doors, at the top of which was a stained opaque window. A panel on one of the doors read: *Police Telephone Box. Free For Use Of Public. Officers And Cars Respond To Urgent Calls. Pull To Open.* On its stacked roof a yellow light flashed on and off for a few seconds and then died away. The TARDIS had landed.

Its arrival, however, had not gone unnoticed. Upon the clifftop directly overlooking the beach there stood a solitary figure clad in a monk's rough black habit and cowl.

As the time-machine clunked to a final halt, he knelt down to take a better look.

He pulled the cowl back off his head. His face was round and chubby and his hair which was cut in a traditional ecclesiastical tonsure was streaked with grey. The lines about his eyes betrayed his age but there was still something schoolboyish, even cherubic, about his curious expression.

His steel blue eyes narrowed as he regarded the police box with only the slightest sign of surprise. They betrayed no shock or fear whatsoever. Rather there was a hint of recognition.

He looked out to sea and then back down again at the apparition on the beach. As he rubbed his chin thoughtfully the sun glinted on the large Roman ring he wore on his right hand.

'I wonder,' he muttered to himself. 'I wonder...'

Unaware that their arrival had not gone unnoticed the Doctor and Vicki managed to help the exhausted young astronaut stagger over to a chair and set him down. He had regained consciousness and was now gratefully finishing off a special restorative drink the Doctor had prepared for him.

He drained the glass and handed it back to the Doctor.

'Thanks,' he said and wiped his lips with the back of his hand. 'Sorry about that, Doc.' The Doctor winced at Steven's presumptuous use of the familiar.

'We thought you were dead,' said Vicki. 'Otherwise we would have looked for you.'

'I nearly was,' Steven remarked wryly, remembering his ordeal in the Mechonoids' City. 'I just managed to climb down that cable before it

burnt out. I fell to the ground –

must have been knocked out. And then I came after you.'

'You should have shouted,' Vicki protested.

' *Should* have? Believe me, I never stopped!'

Vicki smiled at him reassuringly. 'Well, you're safe now here in the TARDIS.'

'Yeah...' Steven looked around him, at the strange roundelled walls and the hexagonal control console with its now motionless central column. Dotted about the room were items of antique furniture: an ormolu clock, an old hatstand, a lectern and a wooden chest – all objects the Doctor had collected on his travels through time and space. Opposite Steven were two double doors.

He turned appreciatively to the Doctor. 'Say, this is quite some ship you have here, Doc. I've never seen anything like it.' With some difficulty he attempted to stand, but his legs gave way under him and he fell back into the chair. The Doctor laid a firm hand on his shoulder.

'Now, listen to me, young man,' he declared evenly.

'There are two things you can do. One: sit here until you get your breath back. And two: *don't call me Doc*!'

Steven gulped and nodded. 'Yes, yes, whatever you say, Doc –'

The Doctor raised an eyebrow.

'– tor!' Steven added hastily.

The Doctor snorted approvingly. These young people had to be kept in their place and made to show due respect to their elders and betters. Otherwise there was no telling what mischief they might get into. Satisfied that he had made his point, he went over to the control console. Vicki smiled after him affectionately and then bent down to Steven.

'You were lucky to find the TARDIS in all that jungle,'

she said.

Steven looked down fondly at his panda mascot. 'Yes, we *were* lucky,'

he agreed. ‘You know, I don’t seem to remember much about it. There were two – I don’t know –

boxes or something. One of them had a door. I went through...’ He frowned as he tried to make sense of the images which flooded into his mind. ‘I must have flaked out. I remember registering that it didn’t look like a ship –

it was very small...’ He shook his head, dismissing the idea as nonsense. ‘I must have been delirious.’

‘No, you weren’t. The TARDIS *is* very small – outside.

It’s only in here that it’s big!’

‘Oh, come on!’

Vicki smiled. ‘You don’t believe me, do you?’ she asked.

There was a mischievous note of superiority in her voice.

‘Of course I don’t,’ replied Steven. ‘How can a spaceship be bigger on the inside than the outside? It’s impossible!’

‘This isn’t an ordinary spaceship, it’s a time-machine,’

said Vicki as though it were the most natural thing in the world. She grinned even wider at Steven’s understandable look of disbelief.

‘ *Time-machine?* ’ he scoffed. ‘Then what was that other thing I saw?’

‘The Daleks’ time-machine,’ said Vicki in a matter-of-fact manner. ‘When we escaped them on Mechanus we found it abandoned. That’s how Barbara and Ian got home.’

Steven looked at Vicki warily. She was either teasing him or she was a prime candidate for some very intensive hospital treatment. ‘Come off it, Vicki,’ he said. ‘This ship may have a way-out design but a time-machine? That’s ridiculous!’

‘Doctor,’ Vicki called over, ‘Steven says the TARDIS

isn’t a time-machine.’

‘Oh, does he now?’ said the old man. There was a faint trace of a smile on his lips as he checked the read-outs from one of the panels.

‘Tell him.’

‘I don’t see why I should,’ he said airily. ‘The TARDIS

has landed: he’ll find out soon enough.’

Steven stood up and walked shakily over to the control console. ‘Look, Doctor, I’ve seen some ships in my time, admittedly not like this...’ He pointed down to a lever on one of the six control panels. ‘Well, for instance, what does this do?’

The Doctor raised his eyes heavenwards in despair. He felt like a blessed guide in the National Science Museum.

With a sigh he pointed out what he thought this tiresome young man would consider to be the Ship’s various items of interest.

‘That, young man,’ he declared wearily, indicating a lever, ‘is the main dematerialisation control. That over yonder is the horizontal hold. Up there is the scanner.

Those are the doors and that is a chair with a panda on it.

Sheer poetry, dear boy, sheer poetry!’ He chuckled merrily to himself before saying, ‘Now, do go and leave me alone!’

Realising the futility of trying to get anything resembling a sensible answer out of the old man, Steven tried Vicki again. ‘You gave this ship a name,’ he said.

‘What was it?’

‘TARDIS,’ she replied and spelt out the letters.

‘It stands for *T* ime *A* nd *R* elative *D* imensions *I* n *S* pace.’

Steven thought for a moment and then said, ‘IDBI!’

‘IDBI?’

‘I Don’t Believe It!’

Vicki groaned at the puny joke. ‘You’ll see, you’ll see,’

she said smugly. She was positively relishing the idea of proving Steven wrong, almost as much as the Doctor.

The Doctor interrupted them before they could resume their conversation. ‘I’ve checked all the readings,’ he said.

‘Now, Vicki, I think our guest will need a wash and a shave. The best thing to do would be to fetch him some new clothes and a cloak; bring mine too.’ His eyes twinkled at the prospect of the mischief ahead and he tapped Vicki fondly on the chin. ‘We’ll show him if this is a time-machine or not, won’t we!’

‘Where are we then?’ asked Vicki.

‘Well, judging from all the readings, I think we’ve landed on the planet Earth.’

Steven’s look of amused disbelief slowly changed. There was suddenly something in the Doctor and Vicki’s manner which made him realise that they might be telling the truth after all.

‘Earth?’ he repeated. After two years of captivity had the Doctor finally brought him home?

‘Yes,’ said the Doctor irritably. ‘I presume you’ve heard of it? Now, do hurry up and get changed – I haven’t got all day!’

2

The Saxons

In a small wooded clearing the Saxon woman known as Edith threw another log on the fire. She looked up into the sky at the westering sun. It was getting late and supper still had to be prepared. If her husband didn’t get his meal on time he’d be grumpy and impossible for the rest of the evening. She just hoped he appreciated all the time and effort she put into looking after him.

She wore a coarse shapeless woollen dress, tied around her middle with a length of rough cord, and her feet were covered with worn thonged leather sandals. As the wind blew her long flaxen hair, she swept it back with calloused and ruddy hands.

Fifteen years of marriage had aged her considerably beyond her thirty years, but her eyes sparkled with a ready intelligence and her lined and tired face still possessed an earthy attractiveness which no amount of labour could ever take away. And her husband, Wulnoth, was not a bad man: he had always cared and provided for her. She had no objections to serving his every whim and indeed waiting on

him hand and foot. Edith believed it was the woman's place to be her man's helpmeet and to care for him as best she could.

She stumped wearily over to the side of the small hut she shared with Wulnoth and picked up a heavy iron pot filled with broth. With some difficulty she carried it over and laid it on the crackling fire in the centre of the clearing. Picking up a large wooden ladle, she began to stir the contents, all the time humming softly to herself a song she had learnt long ago at her mother's knee.

Suddenly she stopped. Her acute senses had detected a rustling sound in the forest around her, a noise different to the hundreds of other natural sounds in the woodland. Her eyes darted this way and that as her body tensed, prepared for anything.

She breathed a sigh of relief as she recognised Eldred, dressed in his rough tunic. She had never liked him, distrusting his swarthy bearded looks and his narrow eyes which reminded her of an otter, but he was one of her husband's friends from the village and as such deserved her respect.

Eldred wasted no time with formalities. 'Wulnoth with you?' he asked brusquely.

'Inside.' She nodded towards the hut. As she did so the animal skin which hung over the entrance was drawn back to reveal the burly form of Wulnoth, recently awoken from his afternoon sleep. Like Edith and Eldred, he was short, just over five feet tall; a short golden beard covered his chin and his muscles were firm and large, the result of many years of hard work in the fields which he held in tithe for his master, the Earl of Northumbria.

'Something's landed on the beach,' Eldred said. 'I saw it from the cliff.'

Wulnoth's concern was aroused immediately. There had been far too many tales lately of raids from across the sea.

As head-man it was his duty to organise the defence of the tiny village which lay about half a mile down the hill.

'What is it?' he asked.

'A large blue box washed ashore by the tide – probably from a ship,' Eldred said. 'I didn't go down – I came for you.'

Wulnoth nodded, acknowledging Eldred's deference to his status.

‘What sort of box?’ he asked.

‘I don’t know. I’ve never seen anything like it before.’

Wulnoth sniffed the air and tasted the tang of the salt sea spray on his bewhiskered lips. ‘The tide will be turning soon. We must hurry.’

Without a word of parting to his wife, Wulnoth followed Eldred back into the forest. In seconds the trees and undergrowth had swallowed them up completely.

Edith stared after them, a look of helpless dismay on her face. ‘It’s a long way down to the beach and back!’ she called after them futilely, uttering the classic line of the beleaguered housewife: ‘What about your supper!’

Down on the secluded beach Steven gawped in wonder and disbelief at the battered police box shell of the TARDIS.

He touched it tentatively and felt the faint vibration coming from within. Curiously, he walked all around it, trying without success to reconcile the difference between the craft’s exterior and interior dimensions.

Finally giving up, he joined the Doctor and Vicki who were standing some way off by the shoreline. The Doctor was holding in his hands a rusty horned helmet and examining it with his customary scientific interest.

‘Where did you say you found this, my dear?’ he asked Vicki. The girl pointed over to a rocky promontory some way along the beach.

‘It’s a bit rusty,’ the Doctor muttered to himself, ‘but it’s not that old... tenth century? Eleventh?’ He looked around him. ‘And judging from the TARDIS’s spatial coordinates and the composition of those cliffs behind us I’d say somewhere along the eastern coast of England...’

He turned triumphantly to Steven and proferred him the helmet. ‘There you are, young man,’ he crowed. ‘What do you think of this? A genuine Viking helmet!’

Steven hesitated. ‘Maybe...’ he said finally, careful not to commit himself and give the old man the advantage he was so obviously seeking.

The Doctor snorted derisorily. ‘Maybe?’ he echoed.

‘What do you think it is – a space helmet for a cow?’

‘It could just as easily be part of a costume from some sort of film or pageant, or even a toy left by a child,’ Steven reasoned.

‘Rubbish!’

‘No more so than your idea,’ riposted the young astronaut, determined not to let the Doctor get the better of him. He looked back thoughtfully at the TARDIS.

‘Though your ship is, to say the least, a little unusual...’

‘Aha!’ The Doctor seized on Steven’s words eagerly, regarding them as an admission of surrender. ‘So you’ve changed your tune now, have you?’

‘If it *is* a time-machine,’ he began and before the Doctor had the opportunity to interrupt added hurriedly, ‘and I never said it was... but if it is such an advanced machine surely you must know exactly where and when we are?’

The Doctor who had been preparing to devastate Steven with some choice verbal abuse suddenly shut his mouth.

Steven had unwittingly hit on a very sore point.

‘Well – er – unfortunately we have a slight technical hitch at the moment,’ he said lamely and stalked away to a large group of rocks by the shoreline.

Vicki who had been observing the verbal sparring match with delight suppressed a giggle as she watched the Doctor stomp off in embarrassment. It was the first time she had ever seen him beaten at his own game. She looked up at Steven with new-found respect. ‘As a matter of fact we never know where we’re going to land next,’ she said.

‘So assuming that I believe what you tell me, you can’t take me home?’

‘Not by any direct means,’ Vicki admitted almost shamefacedly. Taking Steven’s hand she led him down to the Doctor who was standing by the outcrop of rocks staring sulkily out to sea.

The Doctor registered their approach but refused to turn around. In an

attempt to defuse the situation Vicki breathed in deeply of the bracing sea air and ventured, 'It's so clean and invigorating out here, isn't it, Doctor?'

'Yes,' said the Doctor dryly. 'It's called fresh air –

something I'm afraid you're not used to in your century, my dear.' He continued to look out to sea.

Recognising the onset of one of the Doctor's childish tantrums, Vicki realised she had to turn his mind to something else quickly. Otherwise, like a small child, he would go all out to make her and Steven's lives a misery.

'Let's go exploring now, Doctor,' she suggested brightly.

The Doctor turned. He regarded Steven with thinly disguised contempt before saying to Vicki, 'Yes, perhaps we can find a village whereby we can convince this young upstart of the true facts.' He was determined to teach this impudent newcomer a lesson if it was the last thing he did.

'Great, Doctor, I'm all for that,' said Steven agreeably.

'But there is one little thing that still bothers me...'

The Doctor sighed. 'And what might that be?' he asked with evident impatience.

'Why did you choose such an unusual design for your ship?' Steven nodded over at the blue box of the TARDIS.

'A police telephone box, is that right?'

Vicki cringed. She could see what was coming. If Steven didn't stop rubbing the Doctor up the wrong way he'd be lucky if he wasn't left stranded on this isolated beach for good.

Even the Doctor's fiery glare couldn't cover up his embarrassment. 'The design is completely immaterial, young man,' he said unconvincingly. 'The TARDIS is required to blend in with its surroundings...' His voice tailed off as he realised how easily he had fallen into Steven's trap.

' *Blend in?* ' Steven asked incredulously, glancing back at the extremely conspicuous sight of a 1960s London police box on a

deserted pebbled beach.

‘Quite so!’ retorted the Doctor. ‘For instance, if we were to land in the Indian Mutiny I suppose the Ship would possibly take on the appearance of a howdah.’

‘How-what?’

‘A howdah!’ exploded the old man. ‘Goodness gracious, what do they teach you in schools these days? A howdah is the carrier on the back of an elephant.’

Steven moved in for the kill. ‘And if the TARDIS

landed on a beach along a cliff it would take on the appearance of a large rock?’

The Doctor spluttered, speechless for once. ‘Yes, yes –

but you do keep on, don’t you?’ Deflated, he went back to the TARDIS where he made an exaggerated pretence of rubbing away at a patch of dirt on one of the windows.

Vicki darted Steven an admonishing look.

‘Do you wonder why I don’t believe you?’ he asked her.

‘That huge rock over there looks exactly like a police telephone box!’

Vicki leapt instantly to the Doctor’s defence. ‘That is merely another technical hitch and the Doctor will repair it one day,’ she said loyally. Seeing that Steven wasn’t in the least bit convinced, she changed the subject. ‘If we’re going to do some exploring we’d better do it now – it’s going to get dark soon.’

Steven, who was by now feeling highly satisfied with himself, followed her back up the beach where they rejoined the Doctor by the TARDIS.

The Doctor made a great show of ignoring Steven as he said to Vicki, ‘I suggest we take a walk along the beach and try and find a spot where the cliffs run down to sea level.’

Vicki nodded in agreement, but Steven, as might by now have been expected, had other ideas. ‘That could be miles!’ he complained. ‘It would be much quicker to climb up the cliffs – they’re not that steep.’

Steven was perfectly right but the Doctor objected on principle. ‘That may be so,’ he said, ‘but I’m not a mountain goat!’

‘We’ll go with you, Doctor,’ offered Vicki, anxious to establish at least an uneasy truce between the two headstrong men before their rivalry escalated into a full scale war.

‘No, you won’t,’ barked the Doctor. ‘You and this young person will stay here with the Ship and wait till I get to the top. Then you can climb up and join me.’ Vicki started to protest but the Doctor silenced her. ‘Don’t argue, my child,’ he said high-handedly and with a flamboyant sweep of his cape stalked off.

Vicki stared after him, defeated, and then turned back to Steven. ‘If you’re going to stay with us you might try being a little more tactful in future,’ she advised him. ‘The way you’re going on you’re asking for trouble.’

‘Don’t you start on me too – I’ve had enough with the Doc!’ pleaded Steven. ‘Come on, let’s go up!’

‘I think we should wait for the Doctor as he said.’

‘Why? Must you always do everything the Doctor tells you?’ Vicki looked doubtful and Steven continued: ‘Sooner or later we’ve got to go up – it might as well be sooner.’ He pointed up. ‘That bit looks climbable.’

‘I’m not very good on heights,’ Vicki protested as Steven dragged her away from the TARDIS.

‘You’ll be all right,’ he promised her.

As Steven and Vicki moved away, a black-clad figure arose silently from his hiding place behind a large rock. It was the same Monk who had observed the TARDIS’s arrival on the beach a while ago.

He had heard every word.

His eager eyes darted all around him as he made sure that the coast was clear. The Doctor had already vanished into the distance and Steven and Vicki were far too busy climbing the rocks some way off to notice him. Raising the heavy skirts of his habit off the ground he dashed over to the police box.

He stood looking at the box for a few moments. There was an

expression of mild distaste on his face as though he didn't entirely approve of its shabby appearance and its tatty paintwork.

He tutted to himself and pushed on the doors. They refused to yield to his touch.

Petulantly he bashed the lock with his fist but only succeeded in grazing his knuckles. He sucked painfully at his hand and then pressed his ear to the locked doors and listened.

A faint humming sound was coming from within the box. His chubby face beamed with pleasure and he nodded knowingly to himself. He really was most extraordinarily clever, he decided: it was just as he suspected all along.

Of course, the sudden appearance of the box and its three occupants could pose a few problems. For a second he wondered whether it was mere coincidence that they had arrived at this precise place and moment. But no matter, he reminded himself, he was, after all, most extraordinarily clever and he would deal with the situation in his usual magnificent and stylish fashion.

He looked up at the sky and sighed. He would never get used to this preposterous notion of telling the time by the position of the sun. How on Earth did those irritating villagers manage? Goodness knows what they did on cloudy days. Shaking his head in defeat, he rolled up his left sleeve to look at his watch.

His wrist was bare.

A frown crossed his face as he realised he had lost his watch. This was serious. He would have to proceed much more carefully from now on: his entire plan depended on time...

Although he would certainly never have admitted it to either Vicki or Steven, the Doctor was feeling distinctly uneasy. He had finally found a point where the cliffs ran down to sea level, but his walk along the beach and up along the cliff had taken him much longer than anticipated and night had fallen.

In the darkness he had lost his way, straying away from the edge of the cliff and deeper into a wild, almost primeval, forest. There was not a sound to be heard apart from the gentle rustling of the sea wind in the trees, the eerie melancholy hoot of an owl, and the occasional far-away howls of dogs. Of course, he reflected grimly, if his calculations were right and this was indeed eleventh-century England those dogs

were most probably very hungry wolves. He tried hard to push that thought out of his mind.

He cursed himself for not thinking to bring a torch. The light from the full moon overhead was barely adequate for him to find any sort of way through this infernal forest.

Finally by pure chance he came upon a rough pathway which wound its way through the trees and bushes.

Welcoming anything in this wilderness which seemed to have a purpose, he followed it.

The pathway, which was in fact little more than a trampled line through the trees, led into a small clearing.

The Doctor noted with wry satisfaction the solitary hut and the dying fire. ‘Civilisation at last!’

No one seemed to be about. Warily he approached the hut and pulled back the skin covering the wooden doorway and stepped inside. The walls within were made of wattle plastered over with clay and supported by oaken beams.

The bare ground was partly covered with leaves and rushes and in one corner there lay a heap of straw-filled sacking which he rightly supposed served as a bed. On a small wooden bench there lay the remains of some small wild creature that had been roasted on a spit. Two wooden and decidedly unhygenic-looking bowls stood close by it.

Tonight’s supper, he imagined.

It was all extremely primitive and certainly not the place to spend a restful night if he could at all avoid it.

He walked out of the hut and back into the clearing. Suddenly a shadowy figure leapt silently out of the surrounding undergrowth and with a wooden pitchfork pushed the Doctor savagely back against the side of the hut.

The Doctor was trapped.

3

The Monastery

Hitching up the heavy skirts of his habit from off the ground, the

Monk trotted up the winding pathway which led to the monastery and its outbuildings at the top of the hill. Silhouetted against the bright orb of the full moon it seemed a dark and forbidding place, discouraging all strangers with its grim and gaunt appearance. Splendidly isolated from the nearby village, it was a perfect base for the Monk's operations.

Panting for breath, the Monk finally reached the top of the hill. He crossed over a small mossy forecourt to the great oaken entrance door set in the cold rough stone of the monastery wall. He looked anxiously around him. Satisfied that he hadn't been followed, he took a large iron key out of his capacious pockets and opened the door, slamming and bolting it firmly shut behind him.

For a few minutes all was quiet on the hill, apart from the cries of nocturnal animals and the crashing of the sea on the rocks far below.

Then in a tiny beaded window set high in one of the monastery buildings a light flashed on. It wasn't particularly bright. It could, indeed, have been the light from a candle apart from the curious fact that it neither flickered nor faltered, but remained constant – as constant, in fact, as a twentieth-century light bulb.

Seconds later the eerie sound of monks chanting vespers swept down the hill and into the forest below.

Wulnoth and Eldred stood at the edge of the cliff and looked down at the surf as it slapped against the rocks below.

'It was on the beach below us here,' insisted Eldred.

'Are you sure?'

'Certain. I remember the way the rocks looked.'

The two men stared silently down for a few moments.

The tide had now come in and flooded the beach where the TARDIS had materialised.

Wulnoth shook his head philosophically. 'Pity,' he said.

'It might have been valuable...'

'It would have been smashed against the rocks by now or washed out to sea,' said Eldred. 'Let's go back.'

Wulnoth and Eldred didn't know it, but the Doctor and his friends had just been marooned.

Unaware of the loss of the TARDIS the Doctor sat on a log outside Edith's hut, and gently massaged his bruised neck.

He was enjoying the warm night air and the distant sound of vespers as it was carried down from the monastery by the wind.

Edith was attending his every need, fussing over him in an attempt to make up for her sudden attack on him. She hoped he would understand: these were strange times and one couldn't afford not to be too careful.

'I hope you will forgive a woman's harsh welcome,' she said. 'We fear strangers but we are always happy to share what little we have with a traveller – not that we see many in these parts.'

The Doctor waved aside her apologies and assured her that the matter was forgotten. Edith smiled gratefully and handed him an ornate drinking horn fashioned out of green glass and decorated with intricate brass workings.

The horn was her pride and joy and had been brought over from the Continent. It had been given to Wulnoth as a gift from a grateful lord and master for his work in getting the crops in on time two summers ago.

'Have some mead,' she offered as the Doctor raised an enquiring eyebrow.

'Mead?' he queried and then remembered. 'Oh yes, mead of course.' He raised the drinking vessel to his lips.

'Well, your good health, my dear.' He drained the horn in one long gulp, savouring the warming mixture of good ale, cinnamon and honey. He let out a most undignified burp.

'Delightful, my dear, quite delightful!'

He leant back against the side of the hut, absolutely contented with his lot. There were few better ways to spend a warm summer's night than being looked after hand and foot, sharing a convivial drink and chat, and listening to the melodic chants of monks on the night air.

'Tell me,' he asked Edith, 'is the monastery near here?'

‘It’s not far,’ she replied. ‘It’s only at the top of the hill.’

She pointed to the north where just above the tree tops there could be made out the dark shape of the monastery and its derelict out-buildings. A single bright light shone in one of its windows.

‘When the wind’s in the right direction,’ continued Edith, ‘you can hear the monks much clearer just as if they were down in the village.’

‘Well, that’s quite understandable,’ said the Doctor.

‘Sounds can play many tricks... Now, I must thank you for your hospitality.’ He made to leave but Edith urged him to sit down again.

‘I’m sure that when my husband returns he’ll insist that you stay the night,’ she said. ‘Then you can rejoin your friends in the morning.’

The Doctor smiled to himself, impressed by Edith’s ready trust in him. He might have been anyone but she was prepared to accept him at face value and offer him whatever kindness and hospitality she could. The suspicion and distrust of later centuries had not yet penetrated this forest. What was it they had said about the England of this period? That a woman with a child could travel unmolested and unharmed from one end of the kingdom to the other, from Northumbria in the north-east to Wessex in the south-west.

He thought for a moment: he supposed Vicki and that tiresome young man – what was his name again? – would be all right for the night – and he would welcome another cup of mead.

‘That’s very kind of you,’ he finally agreed. ‘I hope my young friends aren’t worrying too much about me. I walked much further than I intended.’

Edith smiled, knowing full well that the old man had, in fact, lost his way. Townsfolk were like that: they were at a complete loss among the trees, bushes and wilderness that she and the other woodfolk knew only too well.

‘You’re near the coast here?’ the Doctor continued.

Edith nodded. ‘Yes. While there are fish in the sea a man need never starve,’ she laughed. ‘Of course, there are bad things too...’

‘The Viking raids, for example?’ the Doctor ventured, remembering that the north-eastern coast of England had been much troubled by

the Norsemen in the first half of the eleventh century.

'We've seen very little of them this year, thank the Lord,' she said gratefully. 'Except for that one raid that was beaten off north of here.'

The Doctor nodded wisely. 'Ah yes, I heard of that battle,' he said, never having heard of any such thing. 'The King improved the situation no end –'

'The King?' Edith said indignantly. 'We received no help from Harold Godwinson!'

The Doctor's eyes shone with pleasure at having extracted that piece of information from Edith. He needed to know the exact year in which the TARDIS had landed without arousing the woman's suspicions.

'You know, it seems only yesterday that the good King Edward was laid to rest,' he observed. 'Now, when was that?'

'The beginning of the year.'

'Of course, the beginning of the year!' said the Doctor.

'How silly of me to forget a simple thing like that!' He tapped the side of his head with his forefinger. 'You must forgive me, my memory is not as good as it once was...'

Edith smiled sympathetically at the old man. He raised his drinking horn to take another sip of mead and, finding it empty, looked meaningfully back at Edith.

She got the hint. 'Oh forgive me. I'll get you some more.' She took the horn and hurried back inside the hut, leaving the Doctor alone with his thoughts.

The Doctor grinned. He really was most extraordinarily clever, establishing the exact year like that. Now, if Harold Godwinson was King of England and if King Edward the Confessor was buried at the beginning of the year, the year had to be 1066 – the most famous date in English history.

He looked around at the trees which were whispering in the gentle night breeze. Judging by their leaves it was late summer – the end of August or early September.

As Edith returned he gratefully accepted the mead and asked, 'We *are*

in Northumbria, my dear?'

'Of course,' she said, puzzled. 'Why do you ask?'

'It's just that I can't remember if I'd crossed the border from... er, Mercia,' he lied, hoping he'd got his eleventh-century geography right. 'You must be patient with an old man...'

Edith smiled once more. If she had known the Doctor's true identity, she would either have acclaimed him as a mighty wizard or run away in terror. As it was, she thought there was something rather endearing about this eccentric old traveller in the strange clothes who didn't even know which earldom he was in. 'Come and rest closer to the fire,'

she urged him. 'You must be tired after your journey.'

The Doctor readily agreed, hoping at least for another cup of mead and perhaps even a succulent slice of venison.

But to his disappointment Edith said, 'And excuse me but I have some things to attend to before my husband Wulnoth returns.'

Edith left the Doctor and returned inside the hut.

Resigning himself to the fact that he wasn't going to get another cup of mead unless he actually asked for it, he threw another log on the fire. The night air was becoming slightly chilly. He wrapped his heavy cloak around himself for warmth and stared into the flickering flames...

1066... late summer... the Northumbrian coast...

His brow furrowed in concentration as he tried to remember his English history. If only Barbara were still with him she could help jog his memory now...

But if his memory did serve him right Northumbria was about to suffer a Viking invasion – and very soon. King Harald Hardrada of Norway would even now be asail on the North Sea, making his way to England's north-eastern coast. He would land with his warriors near the village of Scarborough and burn that place down to the ground, before moving on and taking the great city of York.

When news reached London, King Harold Godwinson would already be troubled by news that Duke William of Normandy was planning his

own invasion attempt.

Nevertheless, Harold would mobilise his forces and march up to Stamford Bridge, just east of York. There he would deal his Norwegian rival a final and crushing blow.

And what happened next, thought the Doctor, would in time become basic knowledge to every schoolboy throughout the land. Harold's triumph would be short-lived, for he and his weary men would have to march back south almost immediately to face William's forces at Hastings. There Harold would lose his life and William would be crowned William the Conqueror, King of all England, on Christmas Day in Westminster Abbey.

William the Conqueror would found a mighty dynasty and would bring relative peace and stability to the tiny land of England. It was a peace and stability that would make her for centuries the most powerful and influential country in the history of the planet.

The Doctor clapped his hands in glee: one of the most momentous years in the history of the world – and he was right in the very thick of it! He thought of Edith who remained blissfully unaware of what was about to happen.

Still, life for her and her fellow woodfolk would change very little: it would be many years before the influence of the Norman conquerors was truly felt in this part of the country. And then he thought of Steven: he couldn't wait to see his face when he finally discovered where and when the TARDIS had brought them! That would teach him for doubting the Doctor's word!

He stood up and was about to throw another log on the fire when he stopped. The wind had changed and the noise of the monks at prayer was now much louder. He remained still for a moment, quite enchanted by the beauty and extraordinary clarity of it. It was perfect, almost too perfect...

As he listened a very strange thing happened. The pace of the song suddenly changed, dragged down to almost a low drawn-out groan. Then suddenly, jerkily, the song regained its former tempo, and it was almost as though nothing had happened.

'Woman! Woman, where are you?' he called out.

Edith rushed out of the hut, thinking that perhaps the Doctor had stumbled and hurt himself. Some people just couldn't take their mead.

‘The monastery,’ he snapped. ‘Where did you say it was?’

‘The top of the hill,’ she said, taken aback by his urgent manner. ‘But what’s wrong?’

‘And the monks? Have they been there long?’

Edith shook her head. ‘No... the monastery was deserted for years... and then several weeks ago some monks must have moved back in.’

‘But you haven’t seen them?’ he asked. ‘No one in the village has actually seen them?’

‘That’s true... but how could you know that?’ Edith was baffled by the Doctor’s questioning and abrupt change of mood. ‘One of them has been seen, but never spoken to...’

The Doctor nodded grimly to himself. Already a shocking suspicion was forming in his mind.

‘You’ve been very kind and helpful,’ he said to the confused woman. ‘But I must leave you now.’

‘You’re going up to the monastery?’

‘I most certainly am!’ There was icy determination in the Doctor’s voice as well as more than a little indignation.

Bidding farewell to Edith, he moved off into the forest.

Edith watched him go. She didn’t know why but she was suddenly very worried. Ever since that strange comet had been seen in the sky last April things had been not quite right in this part of the world. Strange things had happened; disturbing rumours had reached the greenwood.

She regarded that shooting star as a mysterious omen of even darker things to come.

In the back of her mind something also told her that the old man in the strange clothes was no ordinary traveller.

He seemed slightly detached, out of place even for a townsman, though he drank his mead well enough for an old man.

And why had he suddenly become so interested in the lonely old monastery on the hill?

Vicki was having a thoroughly miserable time. It was all right for Steven, she thought ruefully, he was used to physical exercise. She had come on board the TARDIS to see interesting places and meet interesting people. She had not, however, joined the Doctor's crew to scrape the skin off her hands and knees scaling cliff faces, walk around for miles in the pitch dark, and now get lost in the middle of what she had decided was an inhospitable and decidedly smelly forest. If they had listened to the Doctor in the first place – as she had wanted to – they would probably be safely back in the TARDIS by now.

'Well, are you coming or not?' Steven asked irritably.

'Let's rest a minute,' Vicki pleaded. 'I'm exhausted.'

Steven considered. 'All right,' he agreed. 'We'll stop here for a while – but we can't stay here all night.'

I don't intend to, she thought sullenly; my idea of a good time does not include freezing to death in the open air with only you and several million insects and creepy-crawlies for company. But she kept her thoughts to herself and merely contented herself with glaring murderously at Steven.

No sooner had she sat down on the mossy ground than she sprang back up to her feet. She grabbed Steven's arm and pulled him into the bushes.

'What do you think you're doing?' he asked in surprise.

'I heard a noise,' she whispered. 'I think someone's coming.'

'So why are we hiding?' he asked. 'It's probably a gamekeeper or something. We can ask him the way.'

'I'd rather we see who it is and if it's safe before we go showing ourselves,' she advised.

Steven dismissed the idea off-handedly and tried to leave the cover of the bushes. Vicki dragged him back.

'Suppose you do what I say for once!' she hissed through clenched teeth.

Steven shrugged indifferently. 'It's all the same to me,'

he said.

Cautiously they peered out of the bushes.

Vicki had been right – there was someone about. It was a dark-haired bearded young man wearing a simple woollen tunic. Over his shoulder was slung a brace of freshly killed rabbits: he had evidently been out hunting and was returning home.

As he walked along the rough pathway his sharp woodland eyes caught something glinting before him in the light of the full moon. He put down the rabbits and bent down to pick it up.

From their hiding place Vicki and Steven could hear the man's tiny gasp of astonishment as he held whatever it was he had found to his ear.

'What is it?' Steven whispered to Vicki. 'Did you drop something?'

Vicki shook her head. 'I don't think so..

Before she could stop him, Steven strode impetuously out of the bushes. Startled by his sudden appearance and fearing the worst, the young man turned and made to run away. Before he could get more than a few paces Steven had bounded after him and brought him down to the ground with a rugby tackle. The other man was taken totally by surprise. It was, after all, a tactic which hadn't been invented yet.

The two men rolled furiously around in the dirt as Vicki dashed out of hiding. 'Leave him alone!' she cried out in concern. 'Stop it, Steven, you big bully!'

Thinking Vicki was shouting him a warning, Steven turned his head, giving the young man the chance to land him a mighty blow to the jaw. He hurled Steven back and then dived on top of him, reaching for his throat.

Realising the impossibility of arranging a truce between an astronaut and a Saxon, Vicki picked up a large fallen tree branch and made for the Saxon who had, by now, gained the upper hand. Seeing her coming, he leapt up and ran, disappearing into the forest like a woodland ghost.

Vicki went over to Steven and helped him to sit up. 'Are you all right?' she asked.

'Yes... thanks for nothing.' Steven shook his head to clear it. 'I should

be all right,' he said and wiped a trickle of blood from the corner of his mouth. 'I got it anyway...'

'What is it then?'

Steven beamed triumphantly at her as he opened up his fist. His voice positively oozed with smugness as he asked,

'Do you still say this is eleventh-century England?'

Vicki stared in disbelief at the object Steven held in his hand. It didn't make sense but she had to accept the evidence of her own eyes.

It was a quartz watch. Across the watch face were written the words: *Made in Hong Kong*.

Guided by the sound of the monks' chanting the Doctor had found it relatively easy to locate the monastery even in the darkness. He now stood by the oaken door, slightly out of breath after his climb up the hill. Like the Monk before him he looked all around. Apart from a solitary owl which perched in a nearby oak tree and glared contemptuously down at him there was not a living soul to be seen.

The Doctor rattled the door to the monastery. It was firmly bolted. He moved away and looked questioningly at the owl who returned his stare with the same haughty air the Doctor usually reserved for Steven.

The Doctor stroked his chin thoughtfully. Should he give his presence away by knocking on the door and demanding entry? Or should he search around the back for another entrance? Or, failing that, find an open window and indulge in some breaking and entry?

The decision was made for him. He whirled around as the door slowly creaked open, apparently of its own accord.

Suspecting some trap, the Doctor moved slowly towards the open doorway; behind him the owl hooted in disapproval and decided that he would never understand just how stupid the human race could be.

The door complained on its rusty hinges as the Doctor pushed it open. There was no one about. Warily he stepped into the monastery and shut the door behind him.

The Doctor found himself in a large cold stone hallway, off which there ran several long and narrow corridors. The flickering light from

the torches on the walls cast eerie shadows on the stone floor. Between the flagstones small clumps of weeds and moss grew; occasionally a mouse or a spider would cross the Doctor's path as he made his way further inside. As he did so his footsteps echoed eerily through the hallway.

The place was damp, cold and musty. From somewhere far off the Doctor could hear the constant drip-drip-drip of water. The monastery seemed to lack that unmistakeable smell of places of worship and study – the sweet aroma of incense and the fragrance of well-polished wood. Instead this place reeked of the rank smell of decay. The Doctor looked up at the high-vaulted ceiling: this too seemed in a state of disrepair and some of the wooden beams were already rotting.

It was as though the place had been left empty and unattended for years. But the wall torches bore witness to its recent occupancy, and the Doctor could still hear quite clearly the sound of monks at their prayers.

Through an archway to his left rose a flight of stone steps which apparently spiralled up to an upper level. He began to climb the steps, keeping one hand trailing on the outside wall to maintain his balance. About halfway up the staircase there was a large antechamber. A heavy curtain hung over the entrance. The sound of the monks seemed to be coming from behind there.

By now the Doctor was hardly expecting to meet a congregation of singing monks behind the curtain. He whipped it over to one side and stepped into the room.

Despite himself, he could not resist a chuckle when he saw what it contained.

On a formica-topped table by an open window there stood an old-fashioned gramophone player complete with a large shell horn. An old 78rpm disc was spinning on the turntable.

This was not the sort of thing one normally expected to find in an eleventh-century English monastery, reflected the Doctor.

Nodding sagely to himself, he bent down and carefully lifted the stylus off the spinning record. Instantly the sound of the chanting monks stopped.

For a few seconds there was absolute silence. Suddenly the quiet was broken by the harsh grating of a portcullis as it slammed down over

the entrance to the antechamber.

The Doctor ran over to it, shaking the bars with his hands.

But it was no use: the bars, though rusted, were made of iron.

Outside on the staircase the Monk appeared, holding aloft a burning torch. He regarded his captive's pathetic attempts at escape with evil amusement.

Their eyes met and in that instant a flash of recognition passed between the two old men.

The Monk threw back his head and laughed triumphantly. He had the Doctor in his power; nothing in the world could interfere with his plans now.

4

Prisoners of the Saxons

In the distance a cock crowed, heralding the beginning of the new day. The early morning sun drenched the hilltop in its still grey light. In the daytime the monastery seemed much less threatening and much more like the old neglected ruin it was.

Within the monastery's cloistered walls the Monk busied himself-with preparing breakfast. On top of a Baby Belling stove bacon, sausage and eggs sizzled in a non-stick frying pan. A rusty toaster by his side popped up two blackened slices of toast which he deftly caught before they had the chance to fall onto the stone floor.

He gingerly placed the hot toast on a plate and then covered it with the fried eggs and meat which he ladled out of the pan with a stainless steel spatula. All the time he was whistling cheerfully to himself a song which wouldn't be written for another nine hundred years.

Standing back, he regarded the cholesterol-loaded meal with a true sense of achievement. He had to be congratulated, he thought: it looked almost good enough to eat. He just hoped that his quarrelsome guest would appreciate all the effort he was putting in to make his stay at the monastery a comfortable one. Laying the plate on a tray beside a bottle of tomato ketchup and a steaming mug of instant coffee, he picked breakfast up and pottered off down a narrow stairway to the Doctor's cell.

When he reached the cell door he pulled back the spy hatch there to look at his prisoner. The Doctor was sitting upright on a horsehair mattress, his face dark with fury. He scowled venomously back at his captor through the spyhole.

Chuckling to himself the Monk carefully put the tray down on the floor and opened the door. He pushed the tray into the cell with his foot and, before the Doctor could make a run for it, locked it again.

'Breakfast!' he shouted through the hatchway with all the affected cheeriness of a holiday camp host. 'Come along now – early to bed, early to rise! You don't want your eggs to get cold, do you?'

In succinct response to his question, the plate of bacon, eggs, sausage and toast came flying back through the open hatch and straight into his face.

The Monk slammed the hatch shut but not before the Doctor had the immense satisfaction of seeing the Monk's chubby face and habit spattered with greasy eggs. 'Go away!' he cried. 'I'll get up when I'm ready and not before!'

With a sigh the Monk wiped the egg off his face with the sleeve of his habit.

There was just no pleasing some people...

Wulnoth, Eldred and Eric, the young man Steven had attacked the night before, had been awake for several hours working the fields and searching for food when they discovered Vicki. She was lying asleep in a small glade, curled up for warmth in her thick woollen cloak.

As they approached her, her eyes snapped open and she sat up. She looked around anxiously. But there was no one there: they had vanished silently back into the forest.

Suddenly she heard the sound of something crashing through the undergrowth towards her. She leapt to her feet and turned, ready to flee.

As the figure emerged from the forest she heaved a sigh of relief, which she quickly followed with a grunt of annoyance. It was Steven.

'What are you looking so jittery about?' he asked.

'I thought I heard something moving about in the bushes...'

Steven looked at her with amused conceit: just like a girl, he thought, always scared of her own shadow. ‘That was me, you idiot! I was looking for some food.’

Vicki’s anger at having been fooled so easily was instantly assuaged by more immediate concerns as she realised that she hadn’t eaten in almost twenty-four hours.

‘Did you find anything?’ she asked eagerly.

‘That’s a matter of opinion,’ he teased. ‘Do you want some breakfast?’

Vicki licked her lips. ‘Yes, please!’

Steven opened up his right fist to reveal a handful of blackberries. ‘Well, you can have some blackberries’ – he opened up his other fist – ‘or you can have some blackberries.’

Vicki glared at him. ‘I don’t think it matters,’ she said, not thinking much of his sense of humour. ‘If you’d been thinking last night instead of mugging innocent passers-by we could be having rabbit for breakfast now.’

‘Have you tried raw rabbit?’ he asked. ‘I can assure you you wouldn’t like it.’

Vicki shrugged sulkily. She began to jump up and down on the spot and hugged herself for warmth. ‘It’s freezing.’

‘We’d better get moving then.’

‘Where? Back to the TARDIS?’

‘Yes,’ he said. ‘We should be able to find it now that it’s light. If the Doctor’s not there we’ll just have to think again.’

Vicki looked thoughtfully up at the morning sky. ‘I wonder what time it is.’

Steven pulled back his sleeve to show her the watch he had found and which he was now wearing. ‘Twenty past five,’ he said pointedly.

Vicki frowned as she remembered the events of the previous evening. ‘I wonder if the Doctor did drop that watch after all..

‘You told me he didn’t have a watch,’ Steven reminded her.

‘I said I didn’t think he had!’ Vicki retorted, trying hard to convince herself.

Steven tutted with derision. ‘Why don’t you just admit that all this eleventh-century stuff is –’ He stopped short as he heard a sudden noise in the bushes.

Vicki gripped his arm. ‘What did I say? I said there was someone there!’

Steven motioned for her to be quiet as he slowly advanced towards the source of the noise. As he turned his back on Vicki, Eldred leapt out from behind her and seized her. In a flash, a dagger had been raised to her throat.

Steven turned to help Vicki and at that instant Wulnoth and Eric bounded out of the bushes in front of him. Taken completely by surprise, Steven was knocked down senseless to the ground. The entire attack had lasted no more than five seconds.

‘What shall we do with them?’ asked Eldred. Wulnoth looked down dispassionately at the unconscious Steven and then at the terrified girl.

‘Take them to the village,’ he said.

Freshly washed and cleaned after his contretemps with the Doctor, the Monk closed the monastery door behind him and breathed in the bracing air as it sailed in from the sea down below. He coughed and beat his chest: all this fresh air couldn’t be good for him, he decided.

He made to look at his watch before remembering that he had lost it. That was careless of him, he thought; but its loss should not interfere with the main course of his plans.

He crossed the forecourt and began to climb the uneven rocky path which led up to the cliff top which served as a useful lookout post over the sea. He was about to take something out of his pockets when he glanced around and caught sight of Edith making her way along the path to the monastery. He quickly turned and ran back down the path, tripping on a loose stone and falling. He rolled down the slope to land back in the forecourt.

When Edith greeted him he had taken a rolled-up parchment from out of his robes and was pretending to read it intently.

‘Good morning, Father,’ ventured Edith, reluctant to disturb the Monk’s study. She had awe for anyone with learning: she herself was unable to read. This was probably just as well as the Monk was holding the parchment upside down.

The Monk looked up in mock surprise. ‘Ah, good morning, my child,’ he said. ‘So deep was I in my meditation that I failed to see you arrive. You must forgive me.’

‘It is I who should ask forgiveness, Father, disturbing you like this.’

‘You are always welcome here,’ he lied, wondering how best to get rid of her as quickly as possible.

Edith handed him the basket she was carrying. ‘We had a good hunt yesterday,’ she said, ‘and I thought you might like some food.’

The Monk’s face lit up. ‘How *very* charitable of you, my dear,’ he purred and looked into the basket. When he saw what was in it his face fell.

‘I’m sorry, Father,’ Edith apologised. ‘I realise it’s poor fare for the likes of you.’

Quite right, thought the Monk, longing for a juicy Porterhouse steak washed down with perhaps a nice Beaujolais or even a Médoc 1961. ‘Do not distress yourself, my child,’ he said kindly. ‘We must all be prepared to make sacrifices when they are asked of us.’

Seeing that Edith showed no signs of leaving he added pertinently, ‘Well, I would like you to stay, and talk and pass the time of day with you... but this morning study and solitude are uppermost in my mind...’

Edith nodded knowingly. ‘Of course, Father,’ she said and turned to go. ‘Good morning.’

‘Good morning, my child, and may the Lord be with you,’ the Monk said.

The moment Edith was out of sight the Monk leapt to his feet and scampered up the rocks to the cliff top. From out of his habit he took a pair of binoculars and raised them to his eyes and looked out to sea.

His eyes scoured the horizon and he stamped his foot in frustration. There was nothing to be seen: just far too many seagulls and the wide

blue-grey expanse of the North Sea. Cursing under his breath, he sat down cross-legged on the cliff top. It was going to be a long, long wait...

The Monk sat there for almost two hours, never once taking his eyes off the line which separated sea and sky. He was obviously waiting for something and as the minutes passed and nothing appeared he grew sulkier and sulkier.

Occasionally he would open a small ornate eighteenth-century snuff box and take a pinch of snuff from it. This was no mean feat in the strong sea wind and more often than not the snuff would be blown from his hand before he even had the chance to lower his nose to it.

Finally just as he was about to give up and return to the monastery to check up on his calculations he saw a tiny black dot on the horizon. Excitedly he raised the binoculars to his eyes once more.

It was still over a mile away but was moving towards the coast of England with incredible speed. The dragon-shaped prow cleaved through the wild waters as the boat's massive sail caught the full force of the eastern wind. On either side of the boat scores of men rowed with all their might, their arms aching as they steered the longboat ever on.

The Monk lowered the binoculars. His eyes were ablaze with delight and a smile lit up his features – the smug smile of a little boy who has been proved right after all.

'At last!' he chortled and rubbed his hands together in glee. 'At last!'

Steven and Vicki had been led through what seemed to them miles and miles of forest but what was in fact little more than half a mile. As the Saxons pushed them further on they stumbled and fell over roots of trees and fallen branches, only to be roughly picked up and marched further on. Eldred, in particular, showed no patience with them and frequently had to be restrained by Wulnoth, to whom he showed a grudging respect.

Vicki marvelled at the ease with which their captors made their way through the forest. They followed no apparent pathway but seemed to know intimately every inch of the forest, every tree, every bush, every branch. She shuddered when she remembered that she and Steven were hoping to find their way back to the TARDIS in this wilderness: their chances would have been comparable to the Saxons understanding the physics of nuclear power.

At last they arrived at Wulnoth's hut where they were forced to sit down on a log, the very same, in fact, on which the Doctor had sat the night before.

Somehow word had reached the village of the newcomers' appearance and a small crowd had gathered to see them. As the Saxons stood deliberating their fate, Steven sat nursing the bump on his head. Vicki looked at him in concern.

'Are you all right?' she asked.

'I've felt better,' he replied sarcastically and then looked over at the villagers. 'It's all pretty authentic Saxon, isn't it?' he said quietly.

'Don't tell me you're actually starting to believe us!'

'They wouldn't go to all that trouble for a fancy dress ball, would they?' he said thoughtfully. He didn't understand the half of it but for the time being he decided that it would be more practical to accept Vicki's version of the situation. Explanations could come later.

He stood up but a warning glance from Eldred made him sit down again immediately.

'It looks as though they want us to stay,' Vicki remarked unnecessarily.

Steven gave a wry smile. 'We must be more popular than we thought.'

Just out of the two time-travellers' earshot the debate about what was to become of them had crystallised into a personal battle of wills between Wulnoth and Eldred.

Eldred was naturally suspicious of Steven and Vicki's strange clothes and their peculiar speech. This part of England which had known relative peace for two hundred years had recently been subjected to Viking raids. Eldred was an intensely practical man who believed in taking no chances.

Wulnoth, on the other hand, preferred to think of Steven and Vicki as innocent travellers who had perhaps strayed on their way. He saw no need to treat them as enemies or criminals until they gave him good reason to do so.

'Travellers?' Eldred mocked his leader's trust. 'With no provisions or belongings? And from where?'

‘We can ask them, Eldred,’ Wulnoth said softly. But behind his words there was a hint of force, a challenge to Eldred to dare to question his authority as head man of the village.

‘Remember Scarborough. Do you want our village to suffer the same fate?’ asked Eldred. ‘They’ve been put ashore somewhere along the coast to spy for the Vikings!’

‘We have no proof of that.’

‘Nor do we have proof of what you say. But remember –

they attacked Eric the other night in the forest. Was that the action of innocent travellers?’

‘They were frightened – lost in the dark...’

‘You have grown soft, Wulnoth,’ said Eldred. ‘You may be head man of the village now, but when the people hear of how you treated our enemies –’

Eldred suddenly broke from the group and lunged for Steven. Steven instantly leapt to his feet and grabbed a fallen branch for protection. But before either of them could exchange blows Wulnoth had grabbed Eldred by the shoulders.

The angry gleam in his eyes made any reproving words unnecessary. Eldred returned his leader’s look of censure with a defiant stare before moving moodily away from Steven. The other Saxons muttered uneasily amongst themselves.

Attracted by all the commotion, Edith, who had been out collecting berries, came onto the scene. She looked at Steven and Vicki strangely, noticing their odd clothes and their smooth skins.

‘Are you looking for an old man with long white hair?’

she asked.

Steven spun round at the sound of the first friendly voice he had heard in a long time. ‘Yes! Have you seen him? Do you know where he is now?’

Before she could answer his question Wulnoth addressed his wife.

‘Of which old man do you speak, woman?’ He was slightly put out that something should have happened in his household about which

he knew nothing.

‘He came here last night. He wore clothes like these two.’

‘Did you question him?’ asked Eldred.

‘A little. He said he was a traveller.’

‘Then he lied!’

Steven protested but Eldred ignored him and turned back to Wulnoth. ‘Wulnoth, I beg you to listen to me. I do not trust them!’

‘Well, I’m not mad about you either,’ grumbled Steven, fortunately too low for Eldred to hear.

Wulnoth considered Steven and Vicki closely before replying to Eldred. ‘I think these people are who they say they are: innocent travellers.’

‘I do not trust them!’ repeated Eldred. ‘Sooner or later you will regret that you didn’t listen to me!’

Vicki stood up and strode forward, despairing of the male sex ever reaching an agreement about anything. ‘Are you going to stay here all day arguing?’ she demanded in the schoolmarm tone she had often heard Barbara using.

‘Either let us go or do whatever you’re going to do to us –

but make up your minds!’

Wulnoth was taken aback, stunned by Vicki’s impudence. Rarely had a woman asserted herself so in a debate. Finally he said, ‘You may go... Edith, take the girl inside and get some food for their journey.’

Edith led Vicki away and Steven, prompted by Wulnoth, threw down to the ground the heavy branch he was still holding, as a sign of truce.

Eldred glared hatefully after him and then stalked into the forest.

Inside the hut, Edith packed into a cloth bundle provisions for Vicki and Steven’s journey: slices of cooked venison, fruit, some bread and cheese. While she was doing this Vicki questioned her further about the Doctor.

‘He was going to stay – in fact, I was just about to get him some more

mead,' replied Edith. 'Then he suddenly decided to go up to the monastery.'

'That's quite near here, isn't it?' asked the girl. 'I heard the singing last night and early this morning.'

Edith nodded. 'It's not far: it's just at the top of the hill behind the forest. I can take you there if you like.'

'No thanks,' Vicki said hurriedly. 'I'm sure we'll be able to find the way if you give us directions.' She looked down at the bundle of food which Edith presented to her. 'This is really very kind of you,' she said, remembering her missed breakfast.

Edith smiled. 'It's the least we can do,' she said. 'You must forgive us for your rough welcome. Times are changing: we all have to be more careful these days.'

They left the hut and Vicki handed the food over to Steven who examined it appreciatively. He stared wonderingly at the watching villagers, and at Wulnoth and Edith in particular, struck by their kindness. Apart from the headstrong Eldred, they had treated them with selflessness and genuine Christian charity. It was something unheard of in his or Vicki's more enlightened centuries.

Wulnoth and Edith smiled pleasantly at the two time-travellers and waved them goodbye. 'God be with you,'

they said.

Steven paused. If he had any last doubts about his circumstances the sincerity in Wulnoth and Edith's voices quashed them. Finally accepting the reality of the situation he mumbled an awkward 'God be with you' and walked thoughtfully after Vicki.

Wulnoth and Edith watched them go. Edith was vaguely disturbed by them. As with the Doctor before, there was something not quite right about the strangers'

manner. They were not foreigners and yet they spoke with a peculiar intonation; their cloaks were grand, though not uncommonly so, but the clothes beneath them were of a kind and weave she had never seen before; the young man was beardless and his skin was whiter and smoother than any Saxon man's, and no Saxon woman would have dared to speak to Wulnoth as the young girl had done. They both seemed oddly out of place...

Her husband interrupted her reverie. ‘Come on!’ he grunted. ‘It’s time we were working in the fields.’

5

The Vikings

Vicki breathed in deeply of the fresh bracing air as she stood waiting with Steven by the huge oaken door of the monastery. She was chewing the last of the provisions Edith had provided for them.

‘It’s beautiful here, isn’t it?’ she said, tasting the tang of the sea on her lips and feeling the breeze on her face. It was a sensation totally alien to the twenty-fifth century in which she had been born.

Steven lifted the ivy which covered much of the monastery’s stone walls. ‘Could use a gardener though,’ he said dismissively. Vicki sighed: some people just had no appreciation of the finer things in life – especially Steven.

‘Are you sure there are people living here?’ he asked.

‘The place looks completely deserted.’

Before Vicki could reply, the door creaked open and the Monk stood before them. He nodded in welcome and smiled beatifically at them like the vicar of some nineteenth-century country church.

‘Good day,’ began Steven. ‘We’re looking for –’

‘We are all looking for something, my son,’ intoned the Monk. ‘Some like myself seek it in the peace and solitude which repose behind these monastery walls –’

‘We’re looking for a friend of ours,’ said Steven.

The Monk looked hurt. There wasn’t any need for Steven to cut him short, especially when he was in full flow. But he hid his disappointment and asked, ‘You think I can help?’

‘Well, he left word in the village that he was coming here,’ Vicki sounded doubtful.

The Monk seized the chance of launching into yet another impromptu discourse on the meaning and purpose of life. ‘Would that we could all realise our ambitions, be they a lifelong wish or a stated intention of journeying to a certain place –’

Before he had the chance to expand on his theme Steven interrupted again. ‘Are you trying to tell us that he didn’t come here?’ he demanded curtly.

The Monk smiled kindly at him. ‘My son, no one has knocked on this door for many a day, welcome though they may be. As the teachings of the Bible tell us –’

‘Are you *sure* you haven’t seen anyone round the place?’

Steven persisted. He could see that the Monk was going to go on all day if he wasn’t stopped.

‘What about the others?’ Vicki asked innocently.

‘ *Others*?’ There was a slight edge to the Monk’s voice.

‘What others?’

‘The other monks.’

‘Ah, of course, the other monks,’ he said, suddenly remembering. ‘I’m sure they would have mentioned it to me if they had seen him.’

Vicki’s face fell. The Monk noted her dismay and said helpfully, ‘However if you will wait here I shall go inside and enquire of my brothers – just to make sure.’ With that he went back inside and shut the door behind him.

Vicki shrugged. ‘It looks as though the Doctor didn’t come here after all,’ she said despondently.

‘I don’t believe a word of it,’ said Steven. ‘He was too cool, too ready with the answers. It was just as if he was expecting us.’

‘How could he be?’ scoffed Vicki. ‘Aren’t you being just a little too suspicious?’ Steven’s constant questioning of anything and everything was beginning to get on her nerves. ‘He seemed genuine enough to me...’

‘If the Doctor didn’t come here, where else would he go except back to the village?’ asked Steven.

‘Why not back to the TARDIS?’ said Vicki. ‘Let’s forget this and get back there – I’m sure that’s where he’ll be...

Besides, what reason could the Monk have for lying?’

‘I’m not convinced, Vicki,’ he said. ‘When he comes out again I’m going to try something. So whatever happens, don’t say a word – you understand?’

Vicki nodded, unsure of Steven’s plan but prepared to go along with his little game for the moment.

After some minutes, the door opened again and the Monk stepped out. His face was a mask of affected concern.

‘I apologise for keeping you waiting,’ he said with mock regret and shook his head sadly. ‘I’m afraid the answer is not the one you wish to hear...’

‘You haven’t seen him then?’ asked Vicki. Steven shot her a warning glance and she shut up.

Steven sighed. ‘Well, perhaps you’ll keep a look out for him?’ he asked.

The Monk nodded eagerly, ‘I certainly will, my son.’

‘You’re sure you’ll remember his description?’ he said evenly.

The Monk rubbed his chin thoughtfully. ‘Yes – let me see – long white hair... a black cloak and rather strange check trousers...’

Steven grinned. ‘That’s it!’ he said. ‘Thank you very much indeed.’

‘You’re more than welcome, my son,’ he said charitably.

‘I am just sorry that I could not have been of more help to you. Good day.’

He paused for a moment, as if considering whether to bless the two travellers, but thought better of it. As he closed the door there was a smug smile on his face and he giggled softly to himself.

Vicki walked away from the monastery, idly kicking up the leaves which littered the forecourt. Suddenly she spun around. ‘Wait a minute!’ she cried out to Steven. ‘We didn’t give him a description of the Doctor!’

‘I know we didn’t,’ Steven said patiently. ‘That means he must have seen him.’

‘You haven’t told me why he should lie though,’ Vicki said sulkily,

resenting the way Steven had fooled even her.

'It's obvious, isn't it?' he said. 'He's holding the Doctor prisoner in the monastery.'

Vicki wasn't so easily convinced. 'It was pretty stupid of him to give himself away like that, wasn't it?' she mused.

Steven dismissed her doubts. 'It's easily done.'

'Too easily,' continued Vicki. 'I don't think we've been quite as clever as we think we've been.'

Steven looked at her quizzically as she went on: 'Say he gave himself away deliberately like that in order to make us think that we've fooled him.'

'So what?' said Steven. 'There's only one way we can find out what's going on in there and that's to break in!'

'But that's exactly what he wants!' returned Vicki, amazed at Steven's lack of good sense.

'Possibly... but if the Doctor's in there we have no other choice.'

'I don't know... There's something about this business I don't like...'

'Look, Vicki, he's only one monk – what possible harm can he do?' he reasoned. 'Let's wait until it's dark.'

Night fell quickly on Northumbria, a still quiet night where the only sound was the crashing of the waves. Upon the cliff top a silent figure stood, looking all around him.

He was a burly warrior, clad in leather battle dress; by his side there hung a long sword and a dagger. Upon his head he wore an elaborate horned helmet on the front of which was embossed the figure of an eagle in flight. The full moon shone down on his bearded face – the face of one of a cruel race of conquerors, the face of a Viking.

Satisfied that his arrival had not been observed he gave the all-clear. Five other Vikings climbed over the cliff edge to join him.

The youngest was a handsome, blond-haired, blue-eyed warrior. He was dressed similarly to his chieftain but wore no helmet.

'No sign of life?' he asked.

The Viking chief shook his head. ‘No, Sven,’ he said and turned to one of the other men. ‘Tell the others down below on the beach. Sven, you, Ulf and Gunnar will go south. Ivarr will take a similar route to the North.’

Sven and his companions nodded their agreement.

Their chief continued: ‘Remember when you rejoin the force we shall want to know the lie of the land, where there is food and fresh water and the strength of the villagers.’

‘And if we’re seen?”asked Sven.

‘Then you have no choice but to fight. But keep in mind that this is no ordinary raid. You are the eyes of the King.’

‘We need provisions also,’ pointed out Ulf, a thick-set, dark, bearded warrior.

‘The first village we find will provide those,’ said Sven.

‘Yes, but be careful,’ advised the chief. ‘If you keep our presence secret Harald Hardrada will have surprise on his side. Now, go.’

Sven and Ulf made their obeisances to their leader and then called Gunnar to their side. He was a huge mighty warrior of few words but of great brute strength.

The chief watched them go and then turned to the remaining men. ‘Send Ragnar and the others up,’ he said.

‘Then we can join the fleet.’

England had just been invaded.

Edith looked thoughtfully up into the starry night sky as hundreds of disturbing thoughts flooded into her mind.

She had awoken from a fitful sleep to find the place beside her in the bed empty. Not that Wulnoth’s absence worried her: he often went off at night to hunt for rabbits or less often down to the village to drink with his friends. But recently she found she needed Wulnoth more and more by her side; she wished he were here now.

Her mother, they said, had had the second sight and it was generally supposed that the gift had been passed down to her. Certainly she had been inexplicably uneasy for several nights now, and her sleep had

been plagued by weird dreams. Life in the great primeval forest of Northumbria, a life which had once been so peaceful, safe and straightforward, now seemed suddenly so confused and fraught.

The Northumbrian had always been almost a race apart from the rest of the Anglo-Saxons, going about their affairs in their own way, and often paying only lip service to the King unthinkable miles away down in London. But now the wider issues of the Kingdom seemed in Edith's mind to be somehow linked with Northumbria's more immediate concerns. The rumours of a planned invasion by Duke William of Normandy, King Harold's mobilisation of his forces, even the great comet of last April had, she felt, something in common with the increased Viking raids along the coast and the appearance of three strangely dressed travellers.

Life had once been so quiet and peaceful; somehow Edith knew it would never be the same again. She hugged herself for warmth; she wondered where Wulnoth was now.

A sudden rustling in the bushes made her jump. She narrowed her eyes and looked before her: she could see nothing. Without taking her eyes for one moment off the bushes, she moved backwards and reached out for a staff which lay by the side of the hut.

She grasped it in both hands and holding it steadily in front of her she moved, like a huntress, towards the source of the noise.

As she passed beneath the overhanging branch of a tree, Gunnar dropped heavily to the ground behind her and seized her by the throat. Before she had time to defend herself Sven and Ulf dived out of the bushes and wrenched the staff from her hands.

Edith screamed and kicked against her attackers. It was no use: the Vikings were much too strong for her, and there was no one around to hear her cries.

Their fingers dug cruelly into her flesh as they dragged her into the hut. She recognised the mad lustful gleam in their eyes, and her screams died in her throat.

Wulnoth was a happy man. It had been a good night's hunt. Along with Eldred and Eric he had trapped more than a dozen rabbits. They would feast splendidly for the next few days.

Laughing and telling bawdy jokes, they passed through the forest and into the clearing before Wulnoth's hut. He had promised that his wife

would provide them with some mead.

With a gasp of horror Wulnoth took in at a glance the overturned cooking pot, the broken staff and Edith's sandals which had come off in her struggle.

' *Edith*!' He ran into the hut, closely followed by Eldred and Eric.

Edith was lying on the clay floor in a state of shock. All around her, furniture had been upturned and pots of ale smashed. Her face was bruised and her clothes were torn and bloodied. She trembled convulsively and her eyes stared straight ahead, unblinking, unseeing. Wulnoth darted over to her side and cradled her head in his arms.

'Get help from the village!' he barked.

'It was the travellers, Wulnoth,' Eldred said gravely.

'None of our folk would have done this... but even I would not have thought them capable of such a deed..

' *Get the men!* ' Whoever had done this to Edith would not remain long unpunished.

As Eldred and Eric left, a woman known as Agnes, who had been foraging nearby and had been attracted by the noise, entered. Seeing her, Wulnoth immediately instructed her to tend to his wife. She bent down and mopped her brow with a cloth soaked with water. All the time Wulnoth held his wife in his arms, gently crooning to her as a mother would to a child.

'Edith, who did it?' he whispered to her. 'Who was it?'

Edith looked blankly at her husband, almost as if she did not recognise him. Then she suddenly sat bolt upright as the one word, dreaded above all others, broke from her lips: 'Vikings...'

Wulnoth's blood froze. He glanced over to Eldred who had just returned; their eyes met and silent agreement passed between them. No matter how powerful the Viking force was, Edith's outrage would not go unavenged.

'The call has gone out, Wulnoth,' said Eldred. 'We are ready.' His voice was soft but there was steel in his words.

Gently placing Edith in Agnes's care, Wulnoth stood up and took his

sword from the lintel above the doorway. It was his prized possession, deadlier than the daggers and axes which were the common weapons of the Anglo-Saxon.

Outside, a band of heavily-armed men from the village were already waiting for him. Their jaws were set and there was murder in their hard cold eyes. All of them had but one thought in their minds: the Vikings had defiled a woman of the village – the Vikings must not live.

6

An Empty Cell

Laughing and drunken, Sven, Ulf and Gunnar made their way through the forest and down to the village, swigging from the jugs of ale they had stolen from Edith's hut.

Every so often they would stop to relieve themselves, and then move on, noisily forcing a path through the dense undergrowth. They had no thought that anyone might be following them, and in their present state they would hardly have cared if they had known.

In contrast to the Vikings, the Saxons knew the forest well and were even now on their trail. And unlike the Vikings they were not drunk, but frighteningly sober.

They slipped through the trees and bushes like spirits, making never a noise and hardly even disturbing the leaves as they followed the trail of half-empty jugs, discarded food, broken twigs and branches which the Vikings had left behind them.

It took hardly any time for Wulnoth's band of blood-hungry Saxons to come within sight of the Vikings. But they held back and pursued them silently, waiting for the right moment to strike. When the Vikings staggered out of the undergrowth and into a small glade, it was then that the Saxons attacked.

One moment the Vikings were alone in the glade, joking bawdily amongst themselves; the next they were set upon by four armed and fierce Saxon warriors.

The odds were against them but the Vikings defended themselves courageously, displaying all the fighting skills which had made them the terror of the northern seas and earned them the sobriquet of widow-makers. Sven and Ulf slashed at the Saxons viciously with their

swords, while Gunnar waved his double-edged axe about him in a protective circle, forcing the Saxons to back away from him.

Wulnoth parried Sven expertly with his sword and forced him into a frozen impasse. They stared hatefully at each other. Behind them Ulf had already despatched one of the Saxons and Eric was having a hard time avoiding the swing of his huge sword.

Eldred had ducked under the swing of Gunnar's axe and was slashing at his legs with his long dagger. Then Gunnar brought his axe down with a bone-crushing blow onto Eldred's shoulder. The actual axehead missed, but the force of the blow splintered Eldred's collar bone and he fell to the floor, howling with pain. Gunnar leapt upon him, pinning the Saxon to the ground, and raised his axe for the final death blow.

Still locked in his deadly embrace with Sven, Wulnoth raised his knee and dealt the Viking an agonising blow in the groin. He broke away from his opponent and bounded over to his friend's aid.

Wulnoth dived on top of Gunnar and dragged him off the helpless Eldred. They rolled around in the dirt and, when Gunnar was on top of him, Wulnoth pushed his sword firmly upwards into the giant's belly. The Viking let out a small confused cry of pain and rolled over dead.

When he saw his comrade's death, Sven cried over to Ulf, who had been successfully warding off Eric's axe, and urged him to retreat. With a snarl, Ulf slashed ferociously at Eric and then rushed off into the forest after his friend.

Pushing the lifeless Gunnar away from him, Wulnoth stood up. 'Find the other men,' he ordered Eric. 'And follow the Vikings.' Eric nodded and rushed off into the forest.

Wulnoth bent over Eldred who was lying on the ground writhing and moaning in pain. He looked down at his collar bone and shoulder where Gunnar's axe had struck. It was a stomach-turning mess of open flesh, broken bone and blood.

'I'll go back to the village,' croaked Eldred.

'Nonono,' said Wulnoth. 'The monastery's much nearer.

Once there the monks can help you.'

He took Eldred's good arm and helped him to his feet.

Eldred winced as he stood up.

Slowly they staggered up the hill to the monastery, confident in their belief that the monks there would do all in their power to help them.

Even now they could hear their orisons on the cool night air.

The Monk pottered down the narrow corridors of the monastery, alternatively wishing that his coarse black habit would stop itching so and that the monastery's previous occupants had at the very least thought to install double glazing in their place of worship. It really was most damnably cold and damp; you would have thought that the Lord might have judged it fit to install a central heating system somewhere.

He muttered irritably to himself and stopped by an open window which overlooked a high growing yew tree. He could hear whispered voices outside.

He paused and smiled to himself. Then he quickly walked off down the corridor and out of sight.

Minutes later, Steven and Vicki climbed in through the window. They looked warily up and down the cold empty passage: the Monk was nowhere to be seen.

'Well, that's a bit of luck, isn't it?' said Vicki. 'The place seems completely empty.'

'The monks must all be at prayers,' guessed Steven.

'Listen – you can hear them singing.'

In the old dark stone confines of the monastery the echoing sound of the monks had an eerie quality about it.

Vicki shuddered; she felt as though she'd just stepped into a ghost story.

Steven laughed at her fear. 'What are you so scared about?' he asked.

'I am *not* scared!' she retorted indignantly. 'And stop treating me like a child... But everything feels odd somehow... And if the Doctor is here why should the Monk imprison him anyway? I thought monasteries were supposed to offer sanctuary to travellers.'

‘Well, we won’t find out standing here talking, will we?’

Vicki nodded; she supposed Steven was right – for a change.

‘Follow me,’ they both said at once, and walked off in opposite directions. Realising that Vicki wasn’t following him, Steven sighed and turned back. He’d better go with her, even if only to keep her out of trouble. Besides, one way seemed just as good as the other.

Out of the corner of her eye Vicki saw Steven turn and follow her lead. She grinned smugly to herself: that would teach him to try and go off by himself! If anyone was going to give orders in the Doctor’s absence it was going to be her.

Vicki had learnt many things from the Doctor. One of them was getting her own way.

Unknown to Steven and Vicki they were being followed.

As they explored the seemingly interminable passageways and chambers of the monastery, always a few feet or so away from them was the Monk, keeping his footsteps in perfect time with theirs as they searched the innumerable empty rooms and alcoves for any sign of the Doctor.

Suddenly an urgent clanging noise reverberated throughout the monastery, drowning out the chanting of the monks and causing Vicki to clutch hold instinctively of Steven’s arm.

‘What was that?’ she hissed fearfully.

‘Relax,’ Steven said with insufferable calm. ‘It’s only someone at the front doorr. There’s no need to get so excited. Still, I think we’d better hide ourselves just in case. C’mon, let’s try this door.’

He took Vicki’s hand and led her through a small arched doorway which came out onto a narrow torch-lit spiral staircase. For some reason the chanting of the monks seemed much louder here. Steven peered down the staircase.

‘I think there’s something down here,’ he whispered.

‘Let’s go and take a look.’ Hand in hand they began to climb down the stairway, taking care not to lose their footing on the worn stone steps.

Up above, the Monk clucked angrily to himself as the knocking

continued to resound noisily throughout the monastery. He sighed and realised that he had better answer it – otherwise whoever it was would just keep at it all night. It was probably only some travelling salesman hawking copies of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* anyway.

'Steven, I don't like this,' Vicki gulped as they approached the bottom of the stairwell and were confronted by a small wooden door. Down here the noise of the monks' singing was almost deafening. 'What if the monks find us snooping around?'

'You're the one who said they always offered sanctuary to innocent travellers,' Steven said sarcastically. 'Let's see if you were right.'

'Trouble is, we're not that innocent,' Vicki reflected gloomily.

Steven pushed open the door and they stepped into a small chamber.

Like the Doctor before them, their eyes gaped in astonishment as they saw the old-fashioned gramophone player on the ricketty table by the open window.

'Steven, this is the eleventh century,' protested Vicki, scarcely knowing what to believe anymore. 'It's impossible!'

Wearily the Monk unbolted and opened the main door of the monastery. Wulnoth and the wounded Eldred were standing before him, their bearded faces drawn with exhaustion.

'Yes? What is it?' he said impatiently, sounding like a grumpy concierge at a Paris pension.

'It's Eldred. He needs your help, Father,' explained Wulnoth and helped his friend stagger into the monastery without asking for the Monk's invitation.

The Monk looked daggers after them. 'By all means, do bring him in,' he said sarcastically, and followed them inside.

He grunted irritably: it was bad enough having to play a sort of latter-day Venerable Bede; now it seemed he was being called upon to do a Florence Nightingale as well.

Really, it was quite true what they would one day say –

there was no peace for the wicked.

After they had recovered from the shock of discovering a perfectly

functioning gramophone player circa 1920 in an eleventh-century English monastery Vicki and Steven had resumed their search for the Doctor. Neither of them could furnish an explanation for the gramophone player: all they could hope was that the Doctor would provide the answer and somehow get them out of this madhouse.

Coming across another flight of stairs they followed it down to the basement of the monastery until they came upon what they took to be the monks' living quarters. On each side of the long stone corridors were doors leading into the monks' cells. All of them were empty and showed no sign of having been occupied for years. Some doors were hanging off their hinges – others were rotten with damp. Steven rightly guessed that down here they must almost be at sea level. He indicated the door at the end of the corridor; unlike the others it was firmly shut.

Vicki nodded. If the Doctor was anywhere in the monastery this seemed the likeliest place: the Doctor had an irritating habit of getting himself locked up in the most inhospitable and inaccessible places.

While Vicki stood guard, Steven went up to the door and pulled back the hatch covering the spy hole. Within the darkened cell he could make out a white-haired figure hidden under a blanket on a raised bed. 'It's the Doctor,'

he whispered to Vicki. 'He seems to be fast asleep.'

Taking a penknife from out of his pocket he inserted it into the key hole. The primitive lock proved no match for his knife and within seconds he heard the click of tumblers as the door sprang open.

Vicki rushed past him into the cell and went over to the sleeping form on the bed. She shook it urgently. 'Doctor!

Wake up!'

There was no response. With a sinking feeling Vicki slowly pulled the rough blanket off the motionless body.

Beneath the blanket there was a pile of old clothes and rags, the Doctor's cape, and a mass of rough white wool.

The Doctor was nowhere to be seen.

Vicki looked over to Steven who stood by the open door, and then at the four strong stone walls of the cell. There was no possible means of

escape, not even a window or an air shaft.

The Doctor had vanished into thin air.

7

Unwelcome Visitors

Vicki rummaged through the clothes on the bed, trying to find some clue which could explain the Doctor's mysterious disappearance.

'Well, this is definitely his cloak,' she said when her search had proved fruitless.

Steven prudently shut the cell door and crossed over to her. 'He was in here all right, Vicki,' he said. 'But what happened to him?'

'The door *was* locked, wasn't it?'

'Of course – you saw me force it open... The Monk thought he was in here too; the clothes on the bed hadn't been moved.' He sat down beside her on the edge of the bed and looked in desperation at the four solid walls around them. 'It just doesn't make sense,' he said. 'He couldn't have walked through the walls. So how did he get out?'

Vicki leapt to her feet. 'There's only one possible answer!' she said definitely. 'A secret passage!'

Steven groaned, as though Vicki had just cracked a particularly bad joke. ' *A secret passage?* Are you serious?'

'They always had them in castles and monasteries and places like that in case of seige or fire or... or...

something...' Vicki's voice tailed off: now that Steven had mentioned it, it did seem a very unlikely idea.

'Come off it,' Steven said. 'A secret passage! That's about as likely as escaping through the ventilation shaft –

and just as clichéd!'

'Do you have a better idea?' asked Vicki. 'Because until you do come up with one I suggest you get up off your backside and help me look!'

Wearily Steven got to his feet and followed Vicki's example of examining the walls of the cell with the palms of his hands.

Behind him Vicki squeaked with excitement. ‘Steven, come and look at this!’

Steven came over to the far wall where Vicki had discovered a large loose stone. He put his fingers into the space between it and the other stones, and levered the loose stone towards him. As he pulled it, it hinged outwards, revealing the entrance to a low dark tunnel.

Vicki was immensely pleased with herself. ‘What did I say?’

‘Who’s a clever girl then? After you.’ Steven waved her on and Vicki skipped smugly into the tunnel.

They had just closed the secret door behind them when the Monk came down the outside corridor. He had made Eldred comfortable and was on his way to collect some medical supplies. On his return he had decided to look in at his prisoner.

He paused at the cell door and stood on tip-toes to look through the spy hole. As he leant against the door it swung open, much to his surprise, and he fell through the doorway to land face down on the cell floor in a most undignified heap.

He picked himself up quickly, anxious to preserve as much dignity as possible, and only then realised that the Doctor was not laughing at him. Puzzled he looked at the disturbed bedclothes and then under the bed itself.

Nothing.

He stood up and scratched his head. A worried frown darkened his brow. Wulnoth and Eldred, even Steven and Vicki, were minor irritations which he could tolerate and deal with; but the Doctor was a far more dangerous quantity – the one person who could interfere with all his carefully laid plans.

‘Father, where are you?’ Wulnoth’s voice echoed down the corridor.

‘Coming, my son, coming,’ the Monk said distractedly and left the cell.

The secret passageway leading out of the Doctor’s cell rapidly turned into a narrow muddy tunnel whose ceiling was so low that for most of the time Vicki and Steven had to crawl along on hands and knees. Roots of trees grew down out of the roof, impeding their slow progress even more as their grasping fingers slipped on the loose earth.

Overhead, narrow flues let in air and through them they could see, some distance above them, the star-filled night sky. Vicki had nightmare visions of the entire tunnel caving in on them and burying them forever.

'How much longer does this go on for?' she grunted to Steven who was following close behind.

'It must go on quite a way, if only to get clear of the monastery.' His face was wet with perspiration.

'It's so damp,' she complained. 'We must be close to the sea.'

'We'd better get out of here quickly,' Steven said. 'We could find the Doctor at the end of all this.'

Vicki grabbed hold of a root to pull herself forward and groaned. 'If I know the Doctor it's not going to be as easy as that!'

While Vicki and Steven dragged themselves torturously through the secret tunnel, the object of their search was enjoying yet another warm cup of mead in the company of Edith.

'From what you've told me, you've saved me quite a journey,' he said, as he eased himself back against the wall of the hut.

Edith looked up from the amber beads she had been rolling about obsessively in her hands. 'To meet your friends, you mean?' she asked listlessly.

The Doctor nodded. 'I told them quite specifically to meet me outside the TARDIS - er, the prearranged place. I was going along to tell them that I'd come to no harm while I was making investigations... Now you say they came here and went off to the monastery!'

'That's right. I can't think how you could have missed them.'

'It's perfectly simple. I left at the - er - rear entrance, you might say.' He stood up and handed the drinking horn back to Edith. He looked at her in concern, wondering why she seemed so quiet, but decided not to pursue the matter.

'Well, my dear, I really ought to be wending my way. I must thank you once again for your hospitality: I'm becoming quite a regular visitor here.'

‘You’ve been my only visitor today,’ she murmured moodily. The Doctor raised an enquiring eyebrow. ‘But of course you don’t know,’ the woman continued. ‘My husband and the men from the village have gone after the Vikings.’

The Doctor’s interest was immediately aroused, and his eyes sparkled with curiosity. ‘You’ve seen them - and their fleet?’ he asked.

‘No, not a fleet,’ replied Edith. ‘This was just a small band of men - they must have come from one ship.’

The Doctor rubbed his chin thoughtfully. ‘I see, I see...’

he muttered and walked slowly away without taking his leave of the Saxon woman.

Edith followed him out of the hut. Her suspicions had been aroused by the old man’s sudden seriousness.

‘You speak of a fleet as though you knew it existed.’

The Doctor turned tetchily on her. ‘I’ve already told you, my dear, that I’ve learnt of varied plans from all the many places I’ve visited,’ he snapped.

Edith was not to be put off by his sharp tone. ‘Plans of the Viking invasion?’ she persisted.

‘Yes, yes, I’m afraid so...’

Realisation dawned in Edith’s face. ‘So that’s why Harold Godwinson is forming an army! Our men have already travelled south to join it. I thought it was William of Normandy’s planned invasion from across the Channel that he feared and not a Viking invasion.’

The Doctor was no longer listening: to him this was all recorded history. ‘The Monk in this situation just can’t be a coincidence,’ he muttered pensively to himself.

‘Did you say the Monk?’

‘Yes... I must face him,’ resolved the Doctor. Suddenly the Monk’s presence at this precise point in history was beginning to make some sort of sense. ‘I realise I’ve got a far shorter time than I thought I had.’ He turned to go and then remembered his manners. ‘I’m always leaving you in a hurry,’ he apologised, ‘but I’m afraid the matter has

some urgency.'

'Surely nothing is so urgent that you can't stay and have some venison and some more mead?' asked Edith.

The Doctor paused for a moment, sorely tempted. Then he told himself that there were far more serious matters at hand than sampling Edith's excellent hospitality. 'No, it's very kind of you, but I must go,' he said firmly.

He hesitated again, as though he were deliberating something in his mind. It wouldn't matter, surely, if Edith were let into a little secret to keep her mind at rest? 'Don't worry,' he said conspiratorially. 'The Vikings will land south of here in the Humber and King Harold will defeat them!'

Edith stared oddly at him as he made his way through the trees. The old man's words disturbed her deeply: it was almost as though he knew what was going to happen. But how could he be so certain? How had he learnt of the Vikings' plans? And what role did the Monk play in all this?

Shaking her head, she returned to her hut.

As the Doctor ventured deeper into the forest, following the light from the monastery, he went over his English history in his head. Harold would defeat the Vikings at Stamford Bridge. Weary and exhausted, he would then travel back down south to be defeated in a few weeks' time by William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings.

Well,' he thought grimly to himself as he walked further away, 'at least that's what the history books said happened...'

Wulnoth looked on with uncomprehending awe as the Monk opened up a battered metal case, on the lid of which was a crudely painted red cross, and rummaged about in its contents. He took out a small plastic container, opened it, and shook two small white tablets out into the palm of his hand.

Motioning for Wulnoth to take a burning torch off the wall and bring it over to Eldred who was lying in a sort of arched alcove in the wall, he went over to the sick man. He raised Eldred's head and put the tablets to his lips.

'Now, Eldred,' he said, sounding just like a friendly family doctor, 'I want you to swallow these.'

Wulnoth instinctively raised his sword. What was this strange enchantment the Monk was trying to inflict on his friend? ‘What are those, Father?’ he asked evenly.

‘Just some penicillin,’ he said absent-mindedly and then hastily corrected himself. ‘Er – a sort of herb!’

He looked disapprovingly at Wulnoth’s raised sword.

‘Wulnoth, I do wish you’d take that outside,’ he said patiently, like a teacher scolding a naughty child. ‘This is a monastery, a house of peace and tranquillity. Can’t you see I’m trying to tend a sick man?’

Wulnoth lowered his sword and dropped his head in shame. The Monk was perfectly right. ‘I’m sorry, Father,’

he said contritely, and left.

As soon as he was out of earshot the Monk bent down closer to Eldred and shook him. Eldred regarded him through semi-conscious eyes. ‘The Vikings you met,’ said the Monk: ‘If they were a scouting party how long would it be before the other ships arrived?’

Eldred looked curiously at the Monk but replied, ‘If they were part of the main fleet, two or three days, Father..

The Monk grinned. ‘Thank you, my son,’ he said and laid Eldred’s head down to rest. Standing up, he chuckled to himself. ‘Two or three days... I’m on schedule, I’m on schedule!’

If Wulnoth hadn’t returned at that moment there would have been nothing that would have prevented the Monk from dancing a little jig of joy. As it was, he still found it hard to keep a serious face as Wulnoth said, ‘He’ll have to stay here for a while, Father. He’s very weak.’

‘Of course he is – he’s lost a lot of blood. I only wish I could give him a blood transfusion.’

‘Blood transfusion?’ Wulnoth did not understand the words.

The Monk kicked himself: he was getting careless in his old age. Changing the subject he raised his eyes and hands heavenwards and intoned, ‘My son, all we can do for Eldred now is to wait and pray. Take your friend home, my son, and give thanks to the Lord that within these walls...’

‘He has to stay here a few days,’ Wulnoth repeated firmly. ‘He’s far too weak to be moved.’

‘Stay *here?* ’ The Monk glared angrily at Wulnoth.

‘Don’t worry, Father,’ Wulnoth said in an attempt to mollify him. ‘My wife, Edith, will come regularly and attend to any extra work. And I will come too if work permits.’

The Monk wagged an admonishing finger at the Saxon.

‘Now, look here...’ he began.

‘Yes, Father?’

The Monk sighed, resigning himself to the inevitable.

Wouldn’t these barbarians ever learn to look after themselves without his continual help and guidance? He didn’t know why he bothered with them at all: he never got any thanks for it, and at times he had the distinct impression that he was being used.

‘Oh – nothing,’ he said through gritted teeth. ‘Of course your friend may stay here until he has recovered from his injuries.’

Wulnoth smiled gratefully. ‘Thank you, Father,’ he said and took his leave of the holy man.

‘Think nothing of it, my son, think nothing of it at all.’

The Monk’s sarcasm was lost on Wulnoth so he stared angrily at Eldred. This wasn’t much use either: Eldred was fast asleep.

The journey through the secret tunnel had been one of the most unpleasant experiences of Vicki and Steven’s lives.

Pushing aside the brambles which concealed the entrance from prying eyes, they stood up, dirty-faced and exhausted, and looked around them.

The tunnel emerged onto a grassy hillside near to the cliffs. It was still the middle of the night and in the baleful blue light of the moon the surrounding wilderness looked even more threatening and intimidating. Behind them they could just make out through a thicket of trees the lights of the monastery. They had travelled about a mile on their hands and knees.

Not surprisingly they could see no sign of the Doctor.

Cupping her hands to her mouth Vicki called out his name. There was no reply save for the disgruntled hoot of an owl and the constant murmur of the sea as it rushed up against the rocks on the beach below.

Steven looked out over the bleak landscape. ‘You were right, Vicki,’ he said. ‘The Doctor wouldn’t wait for us here.’

‘He must have gone back to the TARDIS,’ she replied uncertainly. She had learnt from bitter experience that the Doctor never did quite what was expected of him.

‘There’s something very peculiar going on here, Vicki,’

Steven said. Vicki laughed out loud: that, she thought, was the understatement of the eleventh century.

‘Now, I know I’ve got to accept some things,’ he continued, ‘so I acccept you’ve got a time-machine.’

Vicki raised her hands in jubilation. ‘Hurray!’ she said sarcastically. ‘It’s about time too!’

Steven warned her not to gloat and continued. ‘But the watch, the gramophone player, the Saxons – it just doesn’t add up. It must be something to do with that Monk... I think we should go back to the monastery.’

‘Steven, we have just crawled through at least a mile of nasty wet pitch-black tunnel to get out of the monastery,’

Vicki pointed out quite reasonably. ‘I have no intention whatsoever of going back there!’

‘So what’s your idea? Something odd’s happening here, you admit that?’

‘Yes – but the Doctor will want to investigate as much as you – probably more,’ she argued. ‘So let’s find him first and then all three of us can do it together, OK?’

Steven nodded. He was determined to solve the mystery of the monastery but on the other hand he didn’t particularly relish the idea of crawling back through that tunnel again tonight. ‘All right. Let’s

wait till it's light and find the TARDIS. Then we can discover what's going on around here.'

Beneath the shelter of an oak tree Sven and Ulf paused to rest and nurse their wounds. They had finally succeeded in losing the Saxons who were on their trail.

Ulf looked warily about him, half-expecting a Saxon to leap out from behind a tree and attack them once more. 'As soon as it's light every Saxon from miles around will be looking for us,' he said fearfully.

'Let us rest here a while,' Sven advised. 'Then we will travel south.'

'Why the south?'

'If we put as much distance as possible between ourselves and the Saxons we can still complete our task,'

said Sven.

Ulf recognised the proud determined glint in his comrade's eyes: it was a look common to many Vikings. To fight to the death in the name of one's honour and duty had long been the Viking creed. Ulf, however, had more practical considerations on his mind: namely his own safety.

'We have failed, Sven,' he said bitterly. 'Leave the mission to Ragnar and the others. Let us think of our own safety!'

'We were landed here for a reason!' his comrade insisted fiercely.

'What good can the two of us do?' Ulf asked. 'If we meet up with any Saxons they will kill us easily.'

'And what would you have us do?'

Ulf looked earnestly into his companion's face. 'We can hide.'

'Coward!' spat Sven and raised the point of his sword to Ulf's throat.

'Go on, kill me,' Ulf said evenly. 'If you don't the Saxons will. And you'll be dead too if you don't listen to what I have to say.'

Slowly Sven lowered his sword. Ulf saw the hesitation he felt and pursued his advantage. 'Nothing has changed,'

he said. 'Our army will still land.'

‘And what will happen when we must come before the King?’ asked Sven.

Ulf shrugged. ‘We can meet up with him once he is inland,’ he suggested. ‘Say we were attacked and held.’

With an angry snarl Sven stood up and kicked Ulf back down to the ground. Sven was many things – a harsh warrior, a brutal killer, a violater of women – but he was not a traitor to his King. The very idea filled him with disgust. He stalked off in fury.

‘Don’t pretend it’s only me,’ Ulf called after him. ‘I’m saying what we both think. Our army will still land – even if we had been killed back in the forest.’

Sven turned around and looked curiously at him. ‘I suppose you’ve already thought of a place to hide?’ he sneered.

‘Yes – the monastery.’

Sven laughed. ‘What would you have us do there?’ he scoffed. ‘Ask for sanctuary?’

‘They cannot refuse us,’ Ulf reminded him.

Sven snorted with disgust. ‘Even if they do you’d rather do battle with a band of monks than with the Saxons.’

‘They’ll hide us,’ Ulf persisted. ‘Once we’re inside we can take hostages!’

Sven glared down at Ulf. The man was a coward, constantly concerned with saving his own skin, hardly worthy to be called a Viking... but perhaps he did have a point. They needed a place of security, somewhere where they could recover from their wounds, and eat, before once more continuing their task. ‘If you thought as much of our mission as you do of your own safety...’ he began but Ulf cut him short.

‘Not only my safety, Sven – *yours* too...’

In the chancel of what had once been the monastery’s chapel but was now cold and empty of all sacred relics the Monk stood hunched over a large plain stone sarcophagus which served him as a worktop. He chewed pensively on a biro as he studied the chart he had laid out on the top of the sarcophagus.

Neatly written out in felt pen on the chart before him was a checklist of tasks to be carried out. He went down the list, carefully ticking them off one by one: 1 Arrival in Northumbria

2 Position Atomic Cannons

3 Sight Vikings

With a self-satisfied flourish he checked off the third item and congratulated himself. He was up to date: everything was going according to plan even in spite of the temporary irritation of the Doctor's presence. He read out the next item on the list: 'Light beacon fires.'

That was no problem: the villagers owed him a favour –

they could help him with that. It would be nice to see them doing something useful for a change. He chuckled contentedly and rolled up the chart. Laying it to one side, he bent down and picked up another chart which lay hidden on the floor behind the sarcophagus. He rolled it out and examined it closely.

It was a map – or more precisely a Xeroxed copy of a map - showing the north-eastern coast of England and part of the North Sea at the turn of the eleventh century. He took a spiral bound notepad and a pair of old-fashioned protractors from under his habit and pored over the map.

He clicked his tongue in irritation.

'Now to work this ridiculous thing into miles,' he grumbled. 'So many measurements – miles, kilometres, it's no wonder they don't know where they are half the time!'

He whistled tunelessly to himself as he made several speedy mental calculations and scribbled down notes. Just as he was getting into his stride the sound of someone banging furiously on the door of the monastery reached his ears.

He groaned. 'Not more visitors,' he muttered peevishly.

'What do they think this is – the Park Lane Hilton? It's getting so you can't call a monastery your own!'

He rolled up the map and together with the notepad, protractors and checklist hid it behind the sarcophagus.

‘All right, all right, I can hear you!’ he cried out as the noise showed no sign of abating. ‘I’m coming!’

Murmuring some rather unecclesiastical curses to himself he hurried off to open the door. By the time he had reached it the noise had stopped. He unbolted the door and stepped out into the night air.

No one was around. ‘Hello? Is there anyone there?’ he called out, but no reply came.

Curiously he looked around, half-expecting to see someone hidden in the bushes or behind a tree. But apart from the owl which stared superiorly down at him from its tree branch the courtyard was empty.

Shaking his head, the Monk went back inside the monastery. As soon as he had closed the door and barred it again, he heard a faint tapping on it from outside.

Grumbling, he raised the bar once more and returned outside.

‘All right, I know you’re there somewhere,’ he said to no one in particular. ‘Why don’t you stop playing hide and seek and come out and show yourself ?’

There was no reply. The owl continued to look scornfully at him, making no secret of the fact that he thought him a very stupid person indeed. Ignoring him, the Monk moved further away from the light that issued from the open door and into the trees.

Suddenly he felt the point of a sharp object jabbing him in the back. Warily he put up his hands in a gesture of surrender as a familiar voice behind him said, ‘Don’t try anything foolish – I’ve got a Winchester ’73 right in the middle of your spinal column.’

Out of the corner of his eye the Monk could see the figure of the Doctor who had stepped out from his hiding place behind the large oak tree. What the Monk however couldn’t see was the tree branch which the Doctor prodded into his back.

‘I thought I’d seen the last of you, Doctor,’ he said irritably, as though he regarded the Doctor as a minor, although troublesome, inconvenience.

‘Oh, did you now?’ There was triumph in the Doctor’s voice and a gleam in his eyes. He was deriving intense satisfaction from having turned the tables on the Monk and putting himself once more in

charge of the situation.

‘Well, I happen to be a very curious fellow – very curious indeed! I have some questions for you – and I want some answers!’

‘I don’t know what you’re talking about, Doctor,’ the Monk said innocently. ‘I am just a harmless servant of the Lord doing whatever He asks of me...’

‘And don’t hand me any of that priestly poppycock!’

snapped the Doctor. ‘You’re about as harmless as a rattlesnake!’

‘Doctor, you disappoint me. I thought a man of your judgement and taste would –’

‘Inside!’ ordered the Doctor, and pushed the stick even more sharply into the small of the Monk’s back.

With a world-weary sigh, the Monk led the way into the monastery. He was dismayed at the Doctor’s slight estimation of his character. But there was already a twinkle in his eyes as his mind tried to devise a plan of escape.

After a while, supposed the Doctor, one monastery corridor must begin to look very much like another. The Monk had led him through interminable passage-ways and up countless narrow flights of stairs until it seemed that they could go no further. But always the Monk would find a darkened alcove which led into yet another passage. It was only when they passed a battered oaken door for what must have been the fourth time that the Doctor commanded the Monk to stop.

‘I do believe we’ve come this way before,’ he said. ‘You wouldn’t be trying to lead me round in circles, would you?’

‘As if I would do such a thing...’ The Monk seemed genuinely affronted by the Doctor’s uncharitable suggestion. The Doctor responded by stabbing the stick harder into his back.

‘It’s no use you playing for time!’ snapped the old man.

‘This isn’t some sort of game, no matter what you may think! I want some answers and I want them now!’

Unexpectedly the Monk spun around on his heels and made an attempt to grab what he still thought to be the Doctor’s gun. The

Doctor was too quick for him and, taking advantage of the cleric's momentary surprise at seeing the stick, snatched his weapon away.

'I wouldn't do that if I were you,' he advised the Monk.

'This may not be a gun but it can still do you a considerable amount of harm.' To prove his point he raised the stick menacingly over the Monk's head.

The Monk stepped back instinctively but quickly regained his composure. 'A man of violence as well!' he chided. 'I'm surprised at you, Doctor.'

'Now don't pretend you're concerned for the welfare of my immortal soul!' the Doctor exploded. 'What are you doing here? What are you up to?'

The Monk recognised the determination in his rival's voice and looked warily at the raised stick. It was, he reflected, a rather persuasive argument: faced with the choice of giving away his secret or receiving an undoubtedly painful blow to the cranium, he knew which he would choose.

He opened his mouth to speak, but before he could utter a word the noise of knocking boomed once more through the monastery.

'Visitors!' he said delightedly. 'I must go.'

'You will do no such thing,' said the Doctor and raised the stick even higher.

'But if I don't go they'll get suspicious,' the Monk said cunningly.

'We'll both go,' the Doctor replied. 'I'll open the door and keep an eye on you at the same time.'

The Monk grinned. 'You open the door? That's not a very good idea you know...'

'Oh? And why ever not?'

The Monk looked with exaggerated criticism at the Doctor's frock coat, wing collar shirt and checked trousers.

'Because you're not wearing the right clothes,' he said cunningly.

The noise of knocking thundered once again down the monastery

corridors. Whoever was at the door was becoming extremely impatient. The Doctor considered for a moment.

'I see – first you want to open the door and then seize the chance of reversing the position with whoever it is outside,' he said as the Monk began to protest his innocence. 'Secondly you want to get me into a monk's habit so whoever it is will recognise me as an imposter.'

The Monk opened out his arms helplessly as if that was the furthest thought from his mind. 'Dear me, what an untrusting nature you have, my son.' There was a note of mockery in his voice.

'And you can drop the monk's act too!' the Doctor barked. 'It's all becoming very tiresome.'

The Monk looked hurt. 'I'm only trying to help whoever it is,' he claimed. 'It's probably a traveller looking for shelter.'

The Doctor looked unconvinced as he continued: 'Who else could it be? Doctor, I must remind you that this is a monastery, a place of refuge, sanctuary to all men..

He looked at the Doctor so endearingly that the old man almost felt guilty at denying an itinerant shelter for the night, and loath as he was to admit it the Monk was perfectly right: to refuse entry would arouse suspicion in the village below. Once at the door he would have to bluff it out as best he could.

'Very well,' he harrumphed. 'If you have another cloak with the same type of cowl.' He lowered his stick and rapped the Monk on the ankles with it. 'Proceed!'

As the Monk scurried off, the Doctor followed him.

'And remember,' he said forcefully, ' *no more monkery!* '

The impatient knocking at the door showed no sign of ceasing as the Monk helped the Doctor into a habit made of the itchiest coarsest material he could find. The Doctor slung a long wooden rosary around his neck and taking up his stick once more, walked the Monk to the bolted door.

He motioned the Monk to stand to one side so that he would be concealed when the door was opened. 'Wait there,' he whispered, 'and be quiet.' He noticed with some concern that the Monk was staring appreciatively at the coarse habit which hung loosely off his body.

‘Whatever is the matter with you now?’ he asked irritably.

‘It suits you.’

The Doctor glowered at him. Reminding him once more to be quiet he raised the bolt. Hoping he looked suitably monkish and holy he opened the door.

‘Yes, my son?’ he said gently and then gasped as he felt the steel edge of a sword press against his throat.

Instinctively he raised the stick in his hand, but Sven knocked it savagely down to the ground.

‘What is the meaning of this, sir!’ the Doctor asked indignantly as he took in the figures of the two Vikings in the doorway.

‘Silence, you old fool!’ rasped Sven. He grabbed the Doctor by his throat and pushed him back into the monastery. Turning to Ulf who had followed them in he asked, ‘What do we do with this one?’

‘Lock him up and then find the other monks.’ He grinned evilly at the Doctor. The Doctor turned his face away in distaste as he smelt Ulf’s beer-sodden breath on his face. ‘Now, old man, you will lead us to your cells.’

‘I will do no such thing!’ the Doctor said defiantly. Sven raised his blade back to the Doctors throat. ‘You will do it, old one – or you will die.’

Faced with such an enviable choice the Doctor had no alternative but to obey. Meekly he led the Vikings away down the corridor.

Concealed behind the open door the Monk heaved a sigh of relief. The Vikings had not seen him. With a bit of luck he would be able to keep out of their way. The monastery was large and he knew of many secret hiding places. When they found that provisions were low they would probably leave anyway. As for the Doctor, well, that was just too bad: he had other more important things to worry about now. Gleefully he scuttered off in the opposite direction.

Complaining vociferously all the way, the Doctor led Sven and Ulf down to the cell in which the Monk had imprisoned him earlier. By the time they had reached it Sven and Ulf were beginning to regret that they hadn’t killed the Doctor there and then.

‘This is no way to treat a man in my position!’

complained the Doctor as Sven flung him back into the cell and slammed the door shut.

‘Cease your prattling, grey mane,’ said Ulf and then turned to Sven. ‘You guard him. I will go and give our terms to the other monks.’

He looked through the spyhole at the Doctor who was standing fuming in the middle of the cell. He repeated the terms to Sven: ‘Hide us – or he dies!’

8

The Secret of the Monastery

As he wandered through the monastery, sword in hand and searching for the other monks, Ulf felt strangely ill at ease.

The whole place reeked of decay and neglect as though it had not been occupied for years. Weeds grew through the cracks in the floorstones and flies buzzed around the rank empty rooms. As he walked through the narrow darkened passageways he would occasionally disturb the solitary existence of a mouse.

It seemed totally abandoned. And yet he had heard the sound of the monks chanting earlier and the old man they had imprisoned seemed real enough. His superstitious mind, heightened by his fear and tension, began to provide him with the most terrible explanations. Perhaps the monastery was haunted by a ghostly population of monks and he and Sven, instead of finding shelter, were fated to die within these walls and be condemned to the fire pits of Hell.

As the first rays of dawn began to filter through the stained glass chancel windows, he entered the chapel. It too was empty apart from a few rotten wooden seats, an altar table depleted of all sacred relics and a stone sarcophagus.

It was as cold and as quiet as the grave. Ulf shuddered.

He moved over to the sarcophagus, his eyes all the time darting this way and that, looking for someone – anyone.

As he paused to rest by the stone box, the Monk rose silently from his hiding place behind it and struck Ulf a violent blow on the head with a crooked staff. Ulf slipped unconscious down to the floor.

Suppressing a giggle, the Monk came out from behind the sarcophagus and began to tie up the Viking with a reel of plastic cord. All the while he tutted admonishingly to himself: it really wouldn't help the conversion of the Pagans if monks went around bashing them over the head with the symbol of their office. And tampering with the course of Christianity was most certainly not part of his plan...

An early morning mist was coming in from the North Sea as Vicki and Steven reached the clifftop overlooking the beach where the TARDIS had landed. Vicki looked about her, trying to spot any recognisable landmark.

'It all looks the same to me,' she admitted. 'But I think it was somewhere around here.' It was, in fact, more through luck than good judgement that they had found their way back to the clifftop: for two people born over a thousand years in the future the seemingly endless green expanse of Saxon England looked very much the same.

Steven pointed to a depression in the cliff edge which wound its way down the cliffside. 'I can't be sure, but I think that's an easy way down,' he said. 'Let's take a look.'

They both bent down and peered over the edge. Down below, the sea crashed against the foot of the cliff. The beach – and the TARDIS – had vanished beneath the waves.

'The tide!' gasped Vicki. 'The tide's come in...'

'It usually does,' Steven said dryly.

'No one thought of the tide!' Vicki turned to look at Steven; her eyes were filled with dismay. 'The TARDIS

was down there...'

Steven couldn't understand what Vicki was so worried about. 'So? If the Doctor came back here he'd have moved it,' he said reasonably. 'He wouldn't have left it on the beach.'

'Don't you understand?' Vicki's voice was trembling.

'The only way the Doctor could move the TARDIS would be to dematerialise...'

'So?'

‘If the Doctor left here in the TARDIS then he wouldn’t be able to get back...’ She shook her head in despair. ‘And if he didn’t move it then the TARDIS would have been washed out to sea... Oh no, it can’t be that...’

Vicki’s words and their implication suddenly struck home to Steven. If what Vicki said was true – and there was no reason to doubt her – they could be marooned in the eleventh century forever. He looked back in the direction they had come from. About a mile away, barely visible in the half-light of dawn, stood the monastery. Somehow in the wilderness of Saxon England it seemed their only hope.

‘There’s no point in sitting here,’ he said. ‘I think we should go back to the monastery.’

Vicki was staring forlornly out to sea. ‘The monastery!’

she sniffed at the idea. ‘What good would that do us now?’

‘At least we’d be doing something practical,’ Steven said, rising to his feet. ‘There’s no point in sitting around here moping!’

‘I am *not* moping!’ snapped Vicki and then softened her tone. ‘You don’t know what the TARDIS meant to me...’

‘What do you mean?’

Vicki continued to look seawards. ‘We were going to build a new life on the planet Astra – my father and I –

after my mother died. But he was killed – murdered The Doctor took me on board the TARDIS, looked after me, cared for me... The TARDIS isn’t just a means of travelling from one place to another – it’s become my home. And now I’ve lost it – again...’ Her voice trailed off and there were tears in her eyes.

Steven was silent for a moment and then awkwardly offered her his hand. ‘Come on,’ he said gently. ‘I don’t understand even half of what’s going on here but you never know, maybe the Monk can help us.’

He began to move off towards the monastery, but Vicki didn’t stir from her place on the cliff edge. Suddenly the gleam of metal shining in the early morning light caught his eyes. It was partly covered by a bush. He pulled away the gorse and his eyes widened in amazement.

‘Vicki come and look at this!’

Vicki stood up. The urgency in Steven’s voice had instantly impressed her and made her forget her troubles.

She hurried over to his side.

‘What is it?’ she asked.

‘Just take a look!’

Vicki clutched his arm as she saw the object he had uncovered. It was a short stubby gun barrel, at the base of which was a large protective visor. At its side was what appeared to be some sort of small power pack which hummed gently to itself. The gun barrel was pointing out over the North Sea.

‘What do you make of that?’

Vicki touched it tentatively and cast her eyes over the small control board on the power pack. ‘It’s a gun – of sorts.’

‘Trained out to sea and hidden by the bushes... In Saxon times they used swords and axes and bows and arrows, didn’t they?’

‘Of course...’ Vicki said uneasily.

‘The Monk must have planted it here!’ Steven said excitedly. ‘Do you still say there’s no point in going back to the monastery?’

‘You mean we have to crawl all the way along that tunnel again?’ Vicki didn’t particularly take to the idea.

‘Well, we can hardly knock on the front door can we?’

‘I suppose not.’

‘Well, what are we waiting for? Let’s go!’

The crowing of the dawn cock outside awoke Sven with a start from his sleep. Weary of waiting for Ulf to return from his search of the monastery he had dozed off on the floor outside the Doctor’s cell. As he came to, he reached instinctively for his sword. To his great relief it was still hanging from his belt.

He stood up and looked through the spyhole in the cell door to check on his prisoner. The Doctor had gone. At the far end of the cell the

door leading to the secret passage was wide open.

Cursing himself, Sven unlocked the door and unsheathed his sword. He crossed over to the open passage and looked inside. As he did so the Doctor tip-toed from his hiding place behind the open cell door and tapped the Viking lightly on the shoulder.

Sven turned around and came face to face with a heavy plank of wood. As he dropped unconscious to the floor the Doctor put down the plank and chuckled.

'My dear young man, you had me quite worried!' he said. 'I thought you were never going to come in!'

Congratulating himself on his brilliance, the Doctor left the cell and laughed his way up the stairs to the main part of the monastery. Emboldened by his success at getting the better of a member of one of the fiercest warrior races of all time he was sure that dealing with that meddling Monk would be simplicity itself.

At the same time that the Doctor was making his escape the Monk was making his way down the hillside to Wulnoth and Edith's hut. When he reached his destination he rapped on one of the chestnut-wood door posts and called out the farmer's name. After a few seconds the door covering was pulled back to reveal a worried-looking Edith. Her face instantly relaxed as she recognised the friendly smiling face of the Monk.

'It's you, Father. Is anything wrong?'

'I'm so sorry to call so early, my dear,' he said contritely,

'but I must speak to Wulnoth.'

At the mention of his name Wulnoth appeared by Edith's side in the doorway. Upon seeing the Monk his first thought was that Eldred's condition had worsened during the night.

'Eldred is getting along splendidly,' the Monk reassured him. 'I've come to ask your help and that of the other men from the village.'

'We owe you much, Father,' said Wulnoth. 'We will help you in any way we can.'

'Oh, you can, Wulnoth, you most certainly can!' The Monk clapped his hands for joy. 'I would have come a little later but it seems that I'm

going to be kept rather busy up at the monastery.'

'What is it you want us to do?'

'Prepare beacon fires on the clifftops.' The Monk paused, anxious for Wulnoth's reaction.

'Beacon fires?' The Saxon was puzzled. 'Why do you need beacon fires?'

The Monk laid a reassuring hand on his shoulders.

'Don't worry, my son. I'm expecting some building materials for reconstructing the monastery – I'm sure you will have noticed the sorry state it's fallen into recently.

They're coming by sea and I promised I'd give the ship our location – our exact location.'

Wulnoth looked questioningly at the Monk. 'When are you expecting the ship? It will take a little while to prepare the beacons.'

The Monk remembered what Eldred had told him the previous night. *If they were part of the main fleet two or three days.*

'In a day or two, maybe three,' he said. Noting Wulnoth's hesitation he added, 'You *will* light the fires when I ask you and keep them burning?'

Wulnoth glanced over enquiringly at his wife and then back at the Monk. He shrugged: it was a strange request, but then he supposed both God and monks moved in mysterious ways.

'We will do as you ask, Father,' he promised.

The Monk's smile lit up his chubby face. 'Splendid!

Now, I must go back to the monastery. Eldred needs very special care. Good day, my children, and thank you!'

With a gay step in his walk he turned back and trotted off to the monastery. As soon as he had gone Wulnoth turned back to his wife.

'What did the old man, the Doctor, say of the Vikings?'

he asked thoughtfully.

Edith noted the worried tone in his voice. She too was worried. ‘He spoke of a planned invasion... with many hundred ships...’ She looked up into her husband’s eyes.

She knew exactly what he was thinking. The Monk’s request had been altogether too strange, and too much of a coincidence.

Beacon fires on the cliff top, looking out to the North Sea... Was the Monk in league with the Vikings?

The first thing Vicki and Steven saw after emerging from the secret tunnel leading to the Doctor’s cell was the unconscious form of Sven on the floor. There was a large bruise on the side of his head.

‘A Viking?’ Vicki asked in disbelief. ‘What’s a Viking doing in a monastery?’

Steven quickly bent down and picked up his sword.

‘Well, whoever he is he’s lost an argument with someone.’

He stopped Vicki who was about to bend down to see if she could do anything to help. ‘We can’t bother with him now

– he’ll be out cold for ages. Let’s take a look around.’

‘What are we looking for anyway?’

Steven grinned. ‘We’ll know that when we find it, won’t we?’

Feeling extraordinarily pleased with himself once again, the Monk pranced back into the monastery whistling a Beatles song. The first thing he did was to check on Ulf whom he had left bound and gagged in a small anteroom near the chapel.

‘Oh, you’re still here are you?’ he asked needlessly. He bent down to the Viking, delighted for once to have a literally captive audience, as well as someone who couldn’t answer back.

‘All I’ve got to do is take care of you, your friend and that meddling Doctor, and everything will be going according to plan once more... Oh, by the way, you’ll be pleased to know that I’ve arranged the beacon fires for your colleagues.’

Ulf looked on astounded. The Monk’s words meant nothing to him. By now he was firmly convinced that he had fallen into the hands of, if not a demon, then at the very least a madman.

Seeing that he was not going to get any thanks or congratulations from a gagged Viking the Monk rose to his feet. Instantly someone came up behind him and pressed a Viking sword to his throat.

'There you are, my dear fellow! I knew you'd come back.' The Doctor's voice was overflowing with smugness as he pressed Ulf's blade even closer to the Monk's throat.

'Now which fires? What are they for? Hmmm?'

Even in the daytime the monastery still had an eerie quality to it, decided Vicki, as she and Steven wandered within its walls. Apart from their own echoing footsteps there was not a sound to be heard: she had not even heard the sound of the monks at prayer. It was as though the Monk had been so preoccupied with other matters –

whatever they might be – that he had even neglected to continue the charade of the monastery being occupied.

They had walked down countless corridors, climbed innumerable stairs, explored damp and musty chambers, but had found nothing. The Monk had to live somewhere, at least have some place to sleep, they reasoned, but there was nothing: just the echoing emptiness of a deserted monastery.

Finally they entered the chapel. Like the rest of the monastery it was more or less empty. At the far end the sun streamed through the stained glass windows and bathed a stone sarcophagus in an arc of light.

Vicki ventured further into the chapel as Steven raised his hands in despair. 'It'll take us hours to search this place properly,' he moaned. 'That is, if there's anything to find!'

Suddenly Vicki yelped and fell crashing to the floor.

Steven was at her side in an instant. 'Are you all right?'

She nodded. 'I tripped over something,' she said and then looked down at the ground. 'Steven, look! It's a cable!'

On the ground, half-covered by rushes, was a long, heavily insulated cable. It was this that Vicki had tripped over. It led out of the chapel through a small door and into another part of the monastery; but its point of origin was the stone sarcophagus by the windows.

Vicki picked herself up and joined Steven who had crossed over to the sarcophagus. ‘That’s strange,’ he said.

‘What’s a cable doing coming out of here?’

He laid his sword on top of the stone case and bent down behind it to take a closer look. The cable snaked into a large crack which ran down the centre of the back of the sarcophagus. Steven inserted his fingers into the crack and pulled.

To his surprise the two halves of the stone opened smoothly outwards.

‘It’s a door!’ gasped Vicki.

Steven looked at her. ‘We can get inside!’ Vicki pushed past him and crawled on all fours into the sarcophagus.

Scarcely thinking that there was no space inside for the two of them, Steven followed her.

For a second the dazzling white light from the interior blinded them. As their eyes adjusted to the brilliance, they stood straight up and looked about.

They were stunned beyond words.

Suddenly everything had become very clear. With a shock, they recognised the multi-panelled control console, the roundelled wails, the constant humming all around them.

Vicki turned back to Steven in dumbstruck amazement.

It was impossible, but it was true.

‘It’s a TARDIS!’ she breathed, finally finding her voice.

‘The Monk’s got a TARDIS!’

9

The Monk’s Master Plan

The sweat trickled slowly down the Monk’s brow as he felt the Doctor increase the pressure of the sword on his neck.

He gulped and looked warily at his rival.

‘I repeat my question,’ said the Doctor. ‘What fires and what are they for?’

He took the sword away from the Monk’s neck and waved it around menacingly as though he were considering bringing it down on the Monk’s skull.

The Monk sighed. ‘All right then,’ he began wearily.

‘They’re a signal for King Hardrada and the Viking fleet...’

‘So that’s it!’ cried the Doctor. ‘You plan to aid the Viking invasion!’

The Monk shook his head vigorously. ‘On the contrary, my dear Doctor. The Vikings will see the beacons and think there’s a landing place here. They’ll come in unsuspecting. And then –’

‘And then what? Come on, out with it!’

The Monk took a deep breath. ‘And then... I’m going to destroy them!’

The Doctor’s eyes blazed with fury as he took in the full implications of the Monk’s plan.

‘So that’s it – you’re a time meddler!’ he said finally.

There was severe disapprobation in his voice. ‘No wonder you wanted to get me out of the way. And what exactly are you up to this time?’

‘I’m sure you’ll approve, Doctor.’ The Monk beamed a confident smile at the old man.

‘Are you mad? You know as well as I do the golden rule of time and space travel: *never interfere with the course of history!* ’

‘And who said so?’ asked the Monk ruefully. The Doctor snorted non-commitedly and the Monk continued to plead his case: ‘Don’t you see? It’s much more fun my way – I can make things happen ahead of their time.’

‘Is that so?’ the Doctor asked sarcastically.

‘Of course,’ said the Monk with all the unbridled enthusiasm of a schoolboy sharing a well-kept secret. ‘Do you really think the Ancient Britons could have built Stonehenge without the aid of my anti-gravitational lifts?’

The Doctor's eyes widened with horror as he conjured up the sight of the Monk directing operations on Salisbury Plain. 'Well, you didn't do a very good job, did you?' he said peevishly. 'Terribly draughty place. And the stones are almost falling down now. Heaven knows what would have happened if you'd have been let loose on the Great Pyramids.'

The Monk seemed almost to consider the prospect for a moment and then the Doctor asked, 'And what mischief are you up to now?'

'Not mischief,' corrected the Monk and his eyes glazed over with what he hoped was a suitably visionary zeal.

'What I have in mind is a master plan to end all master plans.'

'Really?' There was weary sarcasm in the Doctor's voice: he had heard it all before.

'The whole course of history changed in one single magnificent sweep!'

'By wiping out the entire Viking fleet?' the Doctor asked flatly.

'Exactly!' The Monk warmed to his theme. 'I don't have to tell you, Doctor, that the main reason King Harold was defeated at the Battle of Hastings was because he had to march north to Stamford Bridge to defeat the Vikings first.'

'And you're thinking of saving him the journey?' the Doctor asked dryly.

'Precisely – with the Vikings out of the way Harold will have a fresh and eager army – there'll be no desertions, no losses. King Harold will kick Duke William back to Normandy before he knows what's happened!' He clapped his hands in delight, highly pleased with his scheme.

'Quite a plan, eh?'

'Yes, quite a plan,' the Doctor agreed pleasantly. The Monk looked oddly at his rival and then smiled. Could the Doctor be coming round to his way of thinking after all?

'Yes,' continued the Doctor, 'I count myself a very fortunate person indeed to have arrived here' – the Monk smiled even more – 'just in time to stop this disgusting exhibition!'

The Monk frowned. ‘You haven’t stopped it yet, Doctor.’

‘Oh, haven’t I?’ said the Doctor. ‘Where is your time-machine?’

The Monk winced as the Doctor prodded him gently in the ribs with the point of his sword. ‘You won’t find anything in there, Doctor,’ he lied.

‘Where is it!’ He jabbed the Monk even harder.

The Monk sighed in resignation. ‘This way, Doctor...’

Vicki and Steven stared around in utter amazement at the control room of the Monk’s TARDIS. To their untrained eyes it seemed to be identical in all the essential features to the Doctor’s. The central console, however, stood on a dais and its control panels boasted some controls and displays absent from the Doctor’s. The scanner screen on the far wall was protected by a pair of white shutters.

After a few moments’ standing by the open double doors they ventured further into the time-machine. Suddenly all the anachronisms they had encountered in the past two days – the watch, the gramophone player, the cannon pointing out to sea – suddenly they were all explained. The Monk had brought them all here – but for what purpose?

Steven wandered over to an anteroom set off the main chamber. He gave an appreciative whistle at what it contained and then called Vicki over.

‘Look at this,’ he said. ‘He’s got some sort of fantastic private collection.’

Vicki came over to look at the contents of the anteroom.

It was packed full of precious antiques and *objets d’art* from practically every period and place of Earth’s history. There were Greek statues and fine Medieval tapestries, elaborate antique timepieces and several old masters lost to the twentieth century. In a corner by a seventeeth-century bureau there was an antique bookcase lined with first editions of almost every major work of world literature.

Each one worth a fortune and together absolutely priceless.

Steven noticed a wooden crate which had been dumped in a dusty corner of the room. He crossed over and took a look inside. It was

packed with short, sinister-looking missiles. He carefully picked one up and examined it more closely. 'Take a look at this,' he said wonderingly. 'They're some kind of neutron missile – their use was outlawed on Earth – or rather will be in about a thousand years' time!'

Vicki whose attention had been taken by a huge leatherbound volume lying on the open bureau came over.

'Pretty unpleasant things whatever they are,' she agreed.

'But what would he want those in his collection for?'

'They could be fired from that weapon we saw on the cliff,' Steven realised excitedly. 'But what does he want to do? Sink a ship?'

'He could sink a whole navy with that lot, I think!' 'But why?'

'He's done a lot of things according to this.' Vicki showed him the old book she had been leafing through.

'What's that?'

'It's a log book, a sort of diary,' Vicki explained. 'Listen to this entry: *Met Leonardo da Vinci –*'

'Who?'

'Da Vinci, you idiot! Don't you know anything?' said Vicki and continued to read: *Met Leonardo da Vinci to discuss with him the possibilities of powered flight...*'

Steven urged her to stop to allow him to get things clear in his mind. 'Hang on – Da Vinci lived in the Middle Ages. I know he tried to build a flying machine, a type of aeroplane...'

'That's right,' said Vicki, 'and according to this it was the Monk who put him up to it!'

'From the sound of it he's been popping in and out of history, trying to push it along whenever he can.'

Vicki nodded and her eyes caught another entry.

'Listen: *Put £200 in a London bank in 1968. Nipped forward two hundred years and collected a fortune in compound interest!* '

Vicki and Steven looked at each other in guilty amusement; in spite of

themselves neither of them could resist a giggle.

Sven staggered out of the Doctor's cell nursing his aching head. A dark bruised swelling had appeared around his left eye, the result of the Doctor's handiwork. He shook his head to clear it and then looked nervously around.

Reassured that there were no monks lurking in the shadows, ready to jump on him, he called out Ulf's name.

There was no reply, just the sound of his own voice as it echoed throughout the monastery.

He began to climb the stairs which led to the ground floor and as he did so a dark shadow quickly hid itself out of sight behind a pillar. Awoken from a fitful sleep, Eldred had wandered down to the cells in search of the Monk and some medicament to stem the stabbing pain he still felt in his shoulder. But as soon as he saw Sven his pain was forgotten. All that mattered now was to escape and warn the village of the presence of Vikings. So silently that his feet made no sound on the echoing floor he followed Sven.

Sven eventually found Ulf where the Monk had left him, gagged and bound to a pillar in an anteroom near the chapel. He released him from his bonds and helped him to his feet. Ulf winced as shafts of pain shot through his cramped legs.

'Where have you been?' he gasped.

'The monk attacked me in the cell and knocked me out.'

'Can't you even guard one helpless old man?' mocked his companion.

'He wasn't as harmless as he appeared,' Sven protested and indicated his black eye to prove the point. 'He has a fire and a vigour in him that I've never seen before in one so old... and anyway, you haven't done so well yourself.'

Ulf grunted, unwilling to agree that Sven was right.

'We should get back to the forest,' urged Sven. 'It is light outside – we will be able to return to our fleet.'

'No. We stay here,' Ulf stated firmly. 'It's safer than being outside. Would you prefer to meet the Saxons again?'

‘They wouldn’t take us so easily this time,’ argued Sven, anxious to leave the monastery and return with all speed to their ship. ‘Before they had surprise on their side – and we would not be hampered by the mead.’

‘Perhaps not,’ said Ulf. ‘But I choose to stay here with the monks - and whatever treasure they may have stored within these walls...’

Sven’s eyes flashed with greed.

The Monk beamed with obvious pride at the large stone sarcophagus in the chapel. With a grand gesture, as though he were presenting some priceless antique for auction, he indicated it to the Doctor. ‘There you are, Doctor: my time-ship!’

The Doctor sauntered casually over to it and walked all round, examining it with a censorious approval. ‘Oh, so that’s it?’ he sniffed, and shook his head sympathetically.

‘This horrible block of stone...’

The Monk sniggered. It would take more than petty insults from the Doctor to dampen his pride, or to conceal the fact that the Doctor was, in fact, madly jealous of his superior TARDIS. ‘That horrible block of stone, as you choose to call it, is a perfect Saxon sarcophagus,’ he said grandly.

‘A Saxon what?’

‘Sarcophagus, Doctor.’

The Doctor grunted and continued his inspection as the Monk went on: ‘And what’s more, I would say it’s much more in keeping with this period than a twentieth-century London Metropolitan police box.’ The Doctor pretended not to hear as the Monk cruelly jibed: ‘What’s the matter, Doctor? Can’t you repair your chameleon circuit? It’s really perfectly simple, you know, I could show you if you like...’

The Doctor glared at the Monk but refused to be drawn into the same trap Steven had set for him earlier. ‘Now don’t try to bamboozle me,’ he snapped. ‘It just so happens that your machine fits into this monastery – but it’s all sheer coincidence!’

The Monk laughed patronisingly. He was enjoying his rival’s discomfort immensely. ‘Luck? Oh, come now, Doctor, there’s no luck about it. I couldn’t have picked a better place for my headquarters

than here.' He waved his hand about. 'A deserted monastery right on the coast –

gullible peasants... No, Doctor, I *planned* to materialise my Ship on this very spot. I *planned* to disguise it as a sarcophagus – and here it is!'

The Doctor snorted haughtily. 'And all this is part of your grand master plan, hmmm?' he asked.

'Precisely. There's nothing hit or miss about my machine.'

'Oh, isn't there now? Well, let's have a look at this great wonder, shall we?' He looked around for some obvious means of entrance and asked dryly, 'Tell me, how does one get into this sarcophagus? Hammer and chisel?'

'There's no need to sulk,' said the Monk sulkily. He moved round to the back of the sarcophagus and opened the doors. 'Mind your head,' he called back up to the Doctor as they entered the time-machine.

Inside the Monk's TARDIS Vicki and Steven had continued their search of the Monk's storeroom of antiques and had found in one of the compartments of the bureau his carefully rolled-up progress chart.

Steven read off the checklist with increasing astonishment: '5: Destroy Viking Fleet. 6: Norman Landing. 7: Battle of Hastings. 8: Meet King Harold.' He rolled up that chart and turned to Vicki. 'Well, that seems to tell the whole story.'

'But we still don't know why, Steven. Why is he planning to do it?' Vicki wanted to know.

'That's a very good question, my child,' boomed a familiar voice behind them. 'I must ask him that myself!'

They both turned to see the Doctor, still dressed in his Monk's habit, lead the Monk into the control room at the point of a sword. Vicki whooped with joy and rushed over to hug the Doctor.

'Doctor, you're safe!' she said gratefully.

'Safe? What's all this nonsense about, child? Of course, I'm safe – why shouldn't I be?'

'We were just so worried. We haven't seen you in days.'

The Doctor released himself from Vicki's warm embrace. 'Well, I have

been conducting some very interesting investigations.' He handed the sword to Steven and gestured around the chamber. 'I see you've found the machine.'

Steven nodded. 'But we still don't really understand what's going on here, Doctor.'

'Well, you'll soon tell us the whole story, won't you, dear fellow?' He looked across to the Monk, who avoided his gaze, and then turned back to Vicki and Steven. 'I thought I told you to stay and wait for me outside the TARDIS,' he said, half-seriously.

Vicki and Steven blushed with embarrassment and mumbled some feeble excuses but the Doctor wasn't listening. He was wandering around the control room, examining the instruments and fittings with an appreciative and critical eye.

'You know, all this is most interesting,' he said as he cast his eyes over the dazzling array of controls and display grids on the central console. 'This is a Mark Four TARDIS.'

The Monk walked over to his rival. 'Yes, indeed, Doctor, it incorporates all the best features of the previous three models.' There was evident pride in his voice as the Doctor continued to assess the Monk's most prized possession.

'Is that later than yours, Doctor?' asked Vicki and then remembered. 'Oh no, I forgot all about it...'

'Forgot what, child?'

Vicki lowered her eyes and said, 'Doctor, we haven't got a time-machine anymore...'

'Haven't we now? What's that supposed to mean?'

'You know we left it on the beach...'

'I remember it very well – I happened to be there at the time,' he said tetchily. What was this wretched child trying to get at? 'My dear, I may appear to you at times to be half-witted but –'

'Doctor, the tide came in.'

If Vicki had expected the Doctor to be shocked she was disappointed. Instead he chuckled lightly and rested a reassuring arm on her

shoulder. ‘Is that all?’ he asked.

‘Isn’t that enough?’ said Steven.

The Doctor shot Steven a pitying look and continued to talk to Vicki. ‘It won’t affect the TARDIS – it’s far too heavy to be swept out to sea. It’ll still be there when the tide goes down.’ He stroked her affectionately on the chin.

‘Dear me, all this fuss over nothing. Now, do stop fretting, child!’

He left a slightly embarrassed Vicki and addressed the Monk. ‘Well, I must congratulate you,’ he said sincerely.

‘This is really a most splendid machine. I do notice there’s been quite a few changes though?’

The Monk leapt at this chance to show off to his rival.

‘Oh yes, Doctor,’ he boasted. ‘In fact this one is fitted with automatic drift control.’

‘And thereby you can suspend yourself in space with absolute safety?’ There was a touch of envy in the Doctor’s voice.

‘Precisely. It’s really a most useful little gadget. You should get yourself one... By the way, what type is yours, Doctor?’ he asked wickedly.

‘Mind your own business!’ the Doctor snapped back.

Steven looked slightly bemused. The Doctor and the Monk were behaving exactly like a couple of old codgers discussing vintage cars. ‘I take it you both come from the same planet, Doctor?’ he asked.

‘I regret that we do,’ the Doctor admitted. ‘But I would say that I am fifty years earlier.’ He turned back to the Monk. ‘Now, when are you going to answer my questions, hmmm?’

‘Er – which questions would those be, Doctor?’

‘You know perfectly well,’ snapped the Doctor, losing his patience. ‘The reason for this deliberate destruction and interference in history.’

‘I want to improve things...’ the Monk began pleadingly, like a little boy in the headmaster’s study.

The Doctor could scarcely believe his ears. ‘Improve things! You! That’s good – that’s very good! Improve what?’

‘History, Doctor. For instance, King Harold. With a few years’ experience I know he would have made a good king.

And then there wouldn’t have been all those wars in Europe; those claims over France went on for years and years...’

The Doctor’s face remained impassive. But Vicki and Steven listened thoughtfully as the Monk continued:

‘With peace the people would be able to better themselves. With a few hints and tips from me they would have jet liners by 1320. Shakespeare would be able to put *Hamlet* on television.’

‘Do what?’

‘The play *Hamlet* on television.’

‘Ah yes, television. I am familiar with the medium.’

Steven, to whom the Monk’s schemes were beginning to sound attractive, even desirable, asked pointedly, ‘Were you going to kill the Vikings with those missiles?’

The Monk looked shamefaced and averted his eyes.

‘Yes, I was,’ he said and added quickly, ‘But if I didn’t...’

The Doctor was outraged. ‘What are we going to do with this time meddler?’ he cried, stalking around the control room. ‘He is utterly irresponsible. He can’t even realise the awful consequences of his action. He wants to destroy the whole pattern of world history!’

The Doctor’s impassioned outburst made the Monk realise the folly of attempting to persuade him of the desirability of his plans. He spun around on his heels and darted out through the open doors of his TARDIS. The Doctor, Vicki and Steven took chase.

The Monk dashed out of the sarcophagus and ran across the chapel making for the door. He ran straight into the arms of Sven and Ulf who seized him roughly by the shoulders,

‘And where are you going, old one?’ asked Ulf in a threatening voice.

The Monk glanced from the cruel face of one Viking to the other. He

gulped. ‘Long live King Hardrada!’ he exclaimed in a sudden flash of inspiration.

He pointed over to the sarcophagus. Standing before it were the Doctor, Vicki and Steven. ‘Those are your enemies!’

Before the time-travellers had a chance to retreat into the sarcophagus the Vikings had pushed the Monk aside and raced up to them. Their daggers pointed menacingly at them.

The Monk threw back his head and laughed. Once again he had gained the upper hand.

10

A Threat to the Future

A small group of Saxon men, angry and eager for battle, gathered around Wulnoth and Edith’s hut. They had come in response to Wulnoth’s call for an urgent meeting of the village’s leaders and all its able-bodied fighting men. The news he had to tell them made their blood run cold: it was what all dwellers on the north-eastern coast of England feared the worst.

‘The old man who came here spoke of a Viking invasion descending upon us.’ Wulnoth’s voice was steady but concealed a blazing hatred. ‘We know that a small scouting party has already landed.’

A murmur of anger passed through the crowd: they all knew what the Vikings had done to Edith and cursed them for it.

‘And now the Monk has asked us to light beacon fires on the cliff tops!’

Eric interrupted Wulnoth. ‘But you have told us that the Monk expects a ship bringing building materials for the monastery. Why should we have reason to doubt his word?’ he asked cautiously.

A few voices added their support to the young man’s words. He had a point. Up to now the Monk had always aided the villagers; at this very moment he was nursing the sick Eldred in the monastery.

‘The old man, the Doctor, spoke the truth,’ insisted Edith. ‘He had no reason to lie.’

‘I still do not trust these strangers as much as you do,’

said Eric. ‘Remember – two of them attacked me in the forest two nights ago. We have no grounds to suspect that the Monk is in league with the Vikings.’

‘Fires on the cliff tips would guide ships in to land!’

repeated Wulnoth. ‘ *Viking ships!* ’

‘We know and respect the monastery as a place of worship,’ said Edith. ‘But what of the Viking spy who passes himself off as a Monk?’

Parts of the crowd were still not convinced. It was hard to reconcile the image of the cheerful smiling Monk with that of an accomplice of the dreaded Vikings. Eric was about to say something else when all eyes turned from him.

Out of the undergrowth behind him there staggered the pale form of Eldred.

Edith rushed to his side and caught him before he could fall, exhausted, to the floor. The Saxons gathered around him in concern.

‘The monastery...’ he croaked through parched lips.

‘Vikings... hiding there...’

Edith looked up and around at her fellow Saxons. There was grim satisfaction in her eyes. ‘You see?’ she said icily.

‘Do we need further proof?’

‘Arm yourselves!’ commanded Wulnbth. ‘We know how to treat raiders and spies!’

In addition to his many other talents the meddling Monk also possessed a silvery tongue. It had taken only a few minutes and several invocations to King Hardrada and various Norse deities to convince Ulf and Sven that he was, in fact, on their side. They regarded him suspiciously, but his obvious eagerness to help their cause, not to mention his craven desire to save his own skin, persuaded. them to trust him for the moment. Should he try to betray them they could always kill him later.

The Doctor, Steven and Vicki had been tied up hand and foot and left by the Monk’s stone sarcophagus. They watched on in horror as the Monk dragged the heavy crate containing the missiles out of his

TARDIS, and delegated the Vikings to pick it up and carry it out of the monastery and up onto the cliffs.

They had carried the crate out of the chapel and into the main hallway when they paused to rest. The Monk, who had been directing operations, chided them. ‘Come along,’

he said tetchily. ‘If we want to send signals to your ship we mustn’t delay like this!’

‘What are those things?’ asked Ulf.

‘They are – er – charms,’ the Monk lied. ‘Yes, that’s right! Charms, my son, to guide your ships to sheltered waters! Now, do come along!’

Wearily the Vikings picked up the crate once more. As they moved away, the Monk sniggered to himself. ‘I know you don’t understand me,’ he said, ‘but believe me, your ships will know they’re there all right!’ Chuckling at his own little joke the Monk followed them. Once again, he congratulated himself on his extraordinary cleverness: if all went according to plan, within hours the entire course of world history would be changed forever.

Back in the chapel the Doctor and Vicki were sitting dejectedly by the sarcophagus. Steven hopped over to rejoin them, and managed to sit himself down – no mean feat when his hands and feet were bound.

‘I can’t find a stone that’s sharp enough to cut through this rope,’ he said despondently and tugged at his bonds.

‘Those Vikings sure know how to tie knots.’

‘Knowing the Monk, he probably lent them a Boy Scout Manual...’ Vicki said gloomily. ‘It looks like he’s going to get away with it after all.’

Steven looked at her seriously. ‘But he can’t – can he?’

He sounded puzzled. ‘I don’t know much about history but I do know that William the Conqueror did win the Battle of Hastings.’

‘Up to now he did,’ said Vicki. ‘I suppose if the Monk succeeds then our memories will change.’

‘Then what about the history books?’

‘That’s all right. They haven’t been written yet! They’ll just write and

print the new version.'

Steven tried to take it all in. 'But that means that the exact minute, the exact second he sinks those Viking ships, every history book, the whole future of every year and time on Earth will change just like that. And no one will know it ever happened.'

Vicki shrugged. 'I suppose that's what I'm trying to say.'

'It's far more serious than that, my dear,' said the Doctor who up to now had remained in thoughtful silence.

'Yes, it's much more serious than either of you realise.'

'How do you mean, Doctor?'

'Think about it, my boy,' said the old man. '1066 is the most important date in the history of this country. The stability the Normans brought to England shaped the entire future of this planet. If the Monk changes the outcome of the Battle of Hastings he will change the entire pattern of world history. He's giving them atomic weapons a thousand years before they understand how to handle them properly. There's no telling what might happen; that's if humanity doesn't succeed in blowing itself to Kingdom Come first of all. They'll have space travel in the early fourteenth century; they'll have reached other civilisations in space by the fifteenth. Never mind about Earth history: how do you think that would affect galactic history? Think of the absolute tyrants of the Middle Ages; imagine them roaming the Universe!'

Steven shuddered. 'There's more to this time-travel business than meets the eye,' he said.

'Precisely! Everything in the Universe is dependent on everything else. To alter even the smallest thing is like dropping a pebble in a pond. The ripples spread outwards in ever increasing circles, affecting everything in its turn.

That is why we must always observe and never interfere in recorded history.' He paused for a moment, as though he were considering the matter and then continued: 'And if King Harold were to win the Battle of Hastings what do you think would happen to you two, hmm?'

'I don't know,' said Vicki. suppose our lives would be different in some ways but we'd be essentially the same people.'

‘You think so? Would you even exist at all?’ asked the Doctor. ‘You’re both English, but can either of you say you come from pure 100 per cent Anglo-Saxon stock? Because if you can’t, all it would take is for one of the Norman invaders to be your distant ancestor and for that one Norman to have been killed in the Battle of Hastings due to the Monk’s interference – and you would never have been born!’

Vicki trembled as the Doctor continued. ‘The Monk might be genuinely interested in creating a better life for the people, but that is not my concern. He is like a deluded little child playing a macabre game, the rules of which he doesn’t really understand. He doesn’t see the implications of his actions. So determined is he to have his own way that he won’t listen to reason. He’s got to be stopped. *He must be stopped!* ’

Under the Monk’s directions Sven and Ulf had managed to carry the heavy case of missiles out into the forecourt before the monastery. Once again the Vikings had been forced to pause to rest. The Monk clicked his tongue impatiently.

‘Yes, I know they’re heavy,’ he said wearily. ‘But you must understand that they’re a special sort of charm.’

‘Where are we taking them?’ asked Sven.

‘Up to the cliff top,’ the Monk said urgently. ‘Now, come on! There’s very little time left. We must be quick.’

Sven and Ulf bent down to pick up the crate again, silently asking themselves whether their new found alliance with the Monk was really worth it.

Suddenly from out of the forest all around them crashed about ten Saxons led by Wulnoth. They were all fiercely armed with swords, daggers, spears and axes. Hopelessly outnumbered, the Vikings dropped the crate and ran after the Monk back into the monastery. The Saxons followed in hot pursuit.

The Vikings ran blindly through the shadowy unfamiliar corridors. But the wily Monk hid himself behind the open entrance door. As the last Saxon raced through the doorway in search of Sven and Ulf, he stepped out of his hiding place and cautiously tip-toed back into the forecourt. It was empty.

He hitched up the skirts of his habit and ran off into the forest. Seconds later Sven and Ulf sped back out of the monastery and

followed the Monk into the trees. Like hounds on the heels of a fox, the Saxons followed closely behind them.

While her fellow Saxons had gone off in pursuit of the Monk and his two Viking accomplices, Edith had searched the chambers of the monastery, looking for the Doctor, Vicki and Steven. She finally found them in the chapel, still struggling in vain with their bonds. Taking the small blade she had started to carry around with her since the Viking attack she quickly cut through the ropes.

'Thank you indeed,' said the Doctor as Edith helped him to his feet. 'It's a good thing for us that you decided to make a search of this place.'

'I knew you must be here somewhere,' said the woman.

'And without your help we would never have known that the Monk was a Viking spy.'

The Doctor paused in mid-stretch. 'A what?' he asked.

'A spy,' repeated Edith. 'He planned to use beacon fires to guide the Viking ships into a safe landing... But of course you know that.'

'Oh yes, of course,' said the Doctor, deciding that it was probably just as well that Edith had accepted this simple explanation of the Monk's presence here. 'Was the Monk caught?' he asked importantly.

Edith laid a reassuring hand on his shoulder. 'Wulnoth will not let either him or his Viking friends escape,' she promised him.

The Doctor, however, seemed troubled. 'There's no doubt they'll catch the Vikings,' he thought aloud. 'But the Monk's a wily old bird – I think he's still got some tricks up his sleeve.'

'They're big enough, that's for sure,' remarked Vicki.

The Doctor seemed lost in thought for a moment, as though he were weighing something up. Then he turned to Edith. 'But are you all right, my dear?' he asked with real concern. 'The last time we met you seemed a little distracted.'

'I am well enough now,' said Edith. An awkward silence followed and then: 'Where are you going to go now?'

'We shall continue with our travels,' said the Doctor.

Behind him Vicki and Steven's faces lit up: they had had quite enough of this place and had secretly been afraid that the Doctor might have wanted to stay and ensure that the Monk was captured.

'But you must come back to the village before you go so we can bid you farewell,' insisted Edith.

'Er, certainly,' said the Doctor. 'My friends and I have some things to do here first, but you go back to the village and we will follow you shortly.'

Edith smiled. 'Very well,' she said and took her leave of the three time-travellers.

The Doctor fondly watched her depart. 'What a perfectly charming woman!' he said. 'And she makes the most delightful mead too!' Suddenly he snapped out of his self-indulgent reverie and turned to his fellow companions.

'Come along, you two! We've still got a lot to do.'

'Such as what?' asked Steven. 'The Monk won't get far with those Saxons after him. Let's just get as far away from here as we can. If I never see another monastery again it'll be too soon for me.'

'Yes, Doctor,' agreed Vicki. 'Can't we just go back to the TARDIS?'

'Good gracious me, no!' The Doctor seemed quite shocked at the very idea. 'Haven't you been listening to a word I've been saying?' Vicki and Steven looked at each other blankly and then back at the Doctor as he said, 'We must stop this time meddler once and for all... Now, have either of you got a paper and pen on you?'

Vicki and Steven shook their heads. 'Be a good fellow and go into the Monk's machine and find one for me, will you?' he asked Steven.

'OK, Doc,' said the young man and crossed over to the sarcophagus.

' *And don't call me Doc!* '

'Who are you going to write to?' Vicki asked the Doctor after Steven had disappeared inside the Monk's TARDIS.

'To the Monk of course,' said the Doctor. 'And then I want you and that young man to search every inch of this monastery for any item – anything at all – which doesn't belong to this time. That gramophone

player, for instance.'

'But what for, Doctor?' asked Vicki, dismayed at the prospect of walking through the gloomy corridors of the monastery once more. 'Can't we just find the TARDIS and leave this place?'

'We've still got a lot of tidying up to do,' said the Doctor. 'We must leave this place exactly the way it was before the Monk found it. Now, hurry along, my child!'

The Monk and his two Viking companions beat their way through the forest and into a small secluded vale. Not far behind them they could hear the angry blood-thirsty cries of the Saxons, no longer attempting to pass silently through the greenwood. The three fugitives looked around in panic, desperately searching for a place to hide.

'Which way do we go now, old man?' asked Ulf. 'This accursed forest seems all the same to me.'

The Monk pointed over to his left. 'There behind the trees,' he said. 'There's a dried-out well. It's deep – we can hide down there!'

Sven and Ulf didn't hesitate but ran off in the direction indicated by the Monk. As they did so, the Monk hared off in the opposite direction.

A few seconds later Sven and Ulf returned angrily to the clearing.

'There's no well there,' said Sven, and then stopped.

The Monk had disappeared.

The Vikings however were not alone in the clearing for long. Moments after, from every corner of the glade, there appeared armed and fierce Saxons. Sven and Ulf whirled around, savagely slashing at their opponents with their daggers. But still the Saxons closed in inexorably around them, parrying the Vikings' lunges with their spears until they finally knocked them out of their hands.

Sven and Ulf looked wildly about: the Saxons formed an impenetrable circle of men around them. Suddenly the two Vikings were seized from behind. The wall of Saxons parted to allow Wulnoth into the circle.

He stood stock still, regarding his two adversaries with undisguised hatred. Slowly he drew his sword from out of its sheath. The blade

glinted cruelly in the late afternoon sun.

When he spoke, the words seemed stilted, broken somehow, as though they came from another's lips. 'This is for what you did to my wife,' he said, and the Vikings knew that their time had come.

From his hiding place in the bole of a nearby tree the Monk shut his eyes and covered up his ears in horror as Sven and Ulf's cries of terror and pain echoed and re-echoed throughout the forest.

11

A Parting Gift

It was a delicate and potentially dangerous operation, reflected the Doctor, as his long fingers felt their way around the complex interior circuitry of the Monk's control console. One false move and goodness knows what would happen to him.

With infinite caution he delicately extracted from the underside of the console an oblong-shaped circuit made of some kind of transparent plastic. Within the circuit innumerable silver and gold filaments bounced and sparkled in the light of the control chamber. A gossamer thin lead still connected the circuit to the console's workings, and as the Doctor gently placed the circuit on the floor he was careful not to break the connection.

A crashing noise behind him made him start. He turned around angrily to see Steven who had just unceremoniously dumped the Monk's crate of missiles onto the floor.

'Good grief, young man!' the Doctor exploded. 'Here I am conducting an extremely delicate operation – and you're trying to blow us all to Kingdom Come!'

Steven looked embarrassed. 'Sorry, Doc,' he said sheepishly and then caught the old man's warning glare. '-

tor! What are you doing?'

'Never you mind,' he said. 'But suffice to say it will put pay to any future schemes the Monk may have. Now, have you and Vicki collected together everything which doesn't belong in the monastery?'

Steven nodded. 'Yes. Those missiles were the last thing.

But I still don't understand why you want all this lot in here.' He gestured to the odd assortment of objects which now cluttered one corner of the control room: a stove and kitchen utensils, the Monk's gramophone player and the formica-topped table were among them.

'Everything must be exactly as it was before the Monk arrived in this century,' he said. 'We don't want the Anglo-Saxons to be listening to Beethoven records before they've discovered electricity, do we? And think of the fuss it would cause if some archaeologist were to discover this collection of things in the ruins of an eleventh century monastery... Now, where has Vicki got to?'

At the sound of her name Vicki skipped lightly in through the open doors. She handed the Doctor a ball of string. 'What are you doing, Doctor?' she asked as she bent down to look at the micro circuit on the floor by the control console. 'What is this thing?' She reached out a hand to touch it but the Doctor slapped it away.

'Now, just keep away from that!' he snapped. 'Do you want to give yourself a shock – or something worse?'

Vicki sulked as the Doctor carefully tied the string around the circuit. He stood up. 'I want you two outside –

I'll join you in a minute... and please, young man, do not try and charge off like a blessed elephant. This is a very ticklish operation and the slightest vibration could spell disaster for us all.'

'Doctor, would you mind telling us just exactly what you are trying to do?' Vicki asked grumpily.

'Go, child!'

Vicki pulled a face and walked out of the Monk's TARDIS. Quickly realising that here was a job for the men, Steven sidled up to the Doctor. 'So what are you doing, Doctor?' he asked.

' *Out!* '

Steven shrugged his shoulders and left to join the waiting Vicki outside. If the old goat wasn't going to let him in on the secret he could blow himself to oblivion for all he cared.

When he was alone the Doctor backed slowly out of the control room, carefully unwinding the ball of string, and never for one second taking his eyes off the micro circuit on the floor to which the string was still

tied.

He retreated from the TARDIS and rejoined an impatient Vicki and Steven outside.

‘Now will you tell us what you’re doing?’ demanded Steven.

‘Ssssh!’ commanded the Doctor. ‘We’re not out of the wood yet.’ He began to pull the string gently towards himself. Inside the TARDIS the circuit was drawn slowly across the floor to the open doors: all the time it still remained connected to the central control console.

Once the circuit was on the threshold of the TARDIS

the Doctor gave a sharp tug on the string, disconnecting the circuit from the console and pulling it out of the TARDIS. He held triumphantly aloft the circuit by the string and chuckled. ‘There it is! I’ve done it! I’ve done it!’

Steven looked at the stone sarcophagus and then back at the Doctor who was practically dancing for joy. ‘Nothing’s happened, Doctor,’ he pointed out.

The Doctor looked at him as if he were mad. ‘Oh, hasn’t it, dear boy?’

‘Aren’t you going to tell us?’ asked Vicki.

‘Well, look for yourselves,’ chuckled the Doctor and invited them to peer inside the sarcophagus.

They both bent down and looked through the open doorway. A slow smile appeared on their faces as they saw what the Doctor had done.

‘He’s not going to like that one little bit,’ sniggered Vicki as she and Steven stood up to join the Doctor.

The Doctor handed Steven the micro circuit. ‘Put this in your pocket,’ he instructed. ‘And whatever you do don’t leave it lying around here. I wouldn’t want all your hard work to go to waste.’

Reaching inside his jacket he took out an envelope and laid it on top of the sarcophagus.

‘Is that the letter you wrote to the Monk?’ asked Vicki.

‘Yes it is – and keep your hands off it, young lady!’

warned the Doctor. ‘I don’t want you nosing into other people’s personal and private correspondence. Good gracious, did they never teach manners at that school of yours?’

He looked around the monastery for one last time.

‘Well, I think we’ve finished here,’ he said. ‘Let us be on our way.’

‘Back to the TARDIS?’ Steven asked eagerly.

‘Eventually,’ said the Doctor. ‘The last thing we have to do is to remove that cannon you told me about off the cliff top. Then we can get back to the TARDIS.’

Some hours later the Doctor, Steven and Vicki stood on the edge of the cliff, looking over the North Sea and enjoying the bracing sea breeze on their faces. The Doctor pointed down to the beach. Wet and covered with seaweed though it was, the familiar blue shape of the TARDIS still seemed the most welcoming sight in the world.

‘There she is!’ he shouted above the cry of the seagulls.

‘Safe and sound – just as I told you!’

Vicki clasped his hand affectionately. ‘Am I glad to see that old police box again!’

‘Yes, indeed,’ agreed the Doctor. He smiled at Steven who had been laboriously dragging the atomic cannon behind him. ‘We must start climbing down the cliff and get that preposterous thing aboard. We don’t want any Vikings discovering something like that now, do we? And we’d better hurry – there’s going to be an invasion shortly,’

he added casually as though he were announcing an imminent patch of bad weather.

‘You mean any minute now the Viking fleet is going to sail past here?’ asked Steven wonderingly.

‘That’s right, young man,’ said the Doctor. ‘And history will be allowed to take its natural course!’ With an agility which would have been surprising in someone even half his age, the Doctor began to clamber down the rocks to the beach below.

Steven smiled and turned to Vicki. ‘I’m beginning to like the idea of being a crew member on board a time-machine!’ he admitted.

‘Crew member! You’ll be lucky!’ laughed Vicki and pointed down to the Doctor who was already half-way down the cliff. ‘He’s the crew; we’re just the passengers!’

‘And both very welcome ones at that, my dear,’ the Doctor called up. ‘Now do come along, I haven’t got all day!’

Vicki winked conspiratorially at Steven and together they struggled with the cannon down the cliff face.

Steven looked down at the Doctor who had now reached the foot and was walking across to the TARDIS, his key in hand. ‘It’s a heck of a way down,’ he said doubtfully. ‘I’m not a mountain goat!’

The full moon beamed down on the wild sea and the empty beach. It had been hours since the last dying echoes of the TARDIS’s dematerialisation had been lost amidst the cries of the seabirds and the crash of the surf. Now Edith stood alone on the clifftop, looking out to sea.

She gazed up into the dark threatening sky. There was a storm brewing from the south-east. Storms were nothing new on the north-eastern coast of England, but Edith’s superstitious mind told her that this was some-thing different, an ominous portent of things to come.

She shrugged her shoulders and walked back down the hill towards the village. What did it matter? They were Saxons. Whatever happened they would weather this storm and every other one. They always had done, and they always would.

Epilogue

Upon the lonely hilltop the old monastery stood silent and dark as it had done for many a year. Over three months had passed and winter had come, bringing with it the snow which covered the ground in a thick crisp blanket of white.

Then a tiny cowled figure came trudging up the hill side, pausing occasionally to look behind him before resuming his arduous pace through the snow. He fought his way through the snow which had drifted up against the monastery door and with frozen fingers pushed the door open. He entered the building and slammed and bolted it shut behind him.

Only then did he stop to catch his breath and hug himself for warmth. Ruddy-faced and grubby, his habit covered with flakes of snow, the

Monk leant against the door and breathed out a long sigh of relief. His breath hung in clouds before his face and his teeth chattered with the cold.

'I'm getting too old for this sort of thing,' he said to himself as he jumped from one foot to another in an effort to keep warm. 'It's ridiculous for a monk in my position.

You'd never catch the Venerable Bede doing this sort of thing!'

After the Saxons had meted out their cruel justice to Sven and Ulf their blood lust had been sated. They had tried to find the Monk but after an hour's search they had given up and returned to the village. The Monk, however, had remained in hiding and had only ventured from his hiding place when night had fallen.

He had not, however, returned to the monastery.

Fearful that the Doctor and the Saxons might be waiting for him there he had retreated inland and walked the ten miles to the next village. There under cover of darkness he had stolen a horse and ridden off to the south.

Refusing to admit defeat, he had the intention of riding to Senlac Hill, the scene of the Battle of Hastings over three hundred miles away. There he intended somehow to warn King Harold of the danger which awaited him.

But the Monk was far from an expert horseman and without any instruments of navigation he soon lost himself in the alien wilderness of Saxon England. He finally arrived at Senlac Hill, weary and despondent, just in time to see the last of the Saxons routed by the Norman forces, and Duke William hailed as Conqueror of England.

Finally conceding defeat he had turned back to the north, stopping only once at a Benedictine monastery for a few nights' rest. He arrived back in Northumbria on Christmas Day just as, down in London, William was being crowned King of England. Now the Monk's only thought was to leave this hostile century as quickly as he could.

The Monk took a torch down from the wall and lit it with his pocket lighter. Holding the torch warily before him he walked quickly through the dark and damp passageways which led to the chapel. His eyes darted all around; afraid that even now Wulnoth and his men might still be waiting for him. But down in the village Wulnoth was more concerned with the disquieting news that had come from

London, rather than with the fading memory of a mysterious monk.

As he passed through the monastery the Monk noted grimly that all his possessions had been cleared out. A terrible thought struck him and by the time he reached the chapel, he was running. To his great relief his TARDIS

was still where he had left it all those months ago. The Doctor, Vicki and Steven had vanished.

'I was right, they've gone,' he muttered and then stamped his foot petulantly. 'It's not fair!' he sniffed. 'It was a wonderful plan and now the Doctor's gone and ruined it!'

For a moment he seemed like a little boy, deprived of his favourite toy. Then he sighed and marched over to the sarcophagus. It was time to leave.

He was about to bend down and enter his TARDIS

when he noticed the envelope on the top of the sarcophagus. He reached out and opened it up.

The letter inside the envelope was written in a clear precise script. ' *My dear fellow*,' the Monk read aloud. ' *I'm sure you'll excuse me but I didn't wait to say goodbye as you are obviously going to be kept very busy for quite some time.* ' The Monk chuckled. 'He's right there!' he said, already thinking of new ways to interfere with history. What was it the Doctor had said about the Great Pyramids? Surely the Ancient Egyptians could use some help here and there?

The Doctor's letter continued: ' *Just in case you still have any ideas about your master plan I took the precaution of stopping your time meddling.* ' A slight frown passed over the Monk's face but he read on: ' *Possibly one day in the future when you've learnt your lesson I shall return and release you.* '

The Monk screwed the note up and threw it away in disgust. He stood still for a moment wondering what the Doctor had meant. Then he shrugged his shoulders: it didn't really matter. The Doctor was an old fool: how could he ever hope to immobilise a Mark Four TARDIS

anyway?

He looked sadly about the chapel for one last time and then bent down to open the doors to his time-machine.

The sight which met his eyes filled him with horror.

The interior of his TARDIS had been reduced in size to match the outside dimensions of the sarcophagus. There was no way the Monk could possibly squeeze himself into the tiny control room. The lights on the miniature console winked maliciously at him, but he had no hope of operating the pin-sized controls.

The Monk moaned in dismay. ‘He’s taken my dimensional control!’ he wailed. ‘He’s ruined my time-machine! He’s left me marooned – marooned in 1066!’

He stood up and paced angrily around the sarcophagus.

His face was white with anger as he shook his fist in the chill air.

‘You haven’t heard the last of me, Doctor!’ he cried out hatefully. ‘I’ll repair my time-machine one day, and I swear I’ll make you pay! One day, Doctor, one day!’

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